

# Yahara Lakes Zebra Mussel Monitoring Report 2025

## Overview

The Yahara Lakes Zebra Mussel Monitoring Program is a collaborative effort among the Center for Limnology, Clean Lakes Alliance, and a committed group of volunteer lake monitors in the greater Madison area. Community monitors help researchers track the spread and abundance of zebra mussels, an aquatic invasive species, around the Yahara chain of lakes and Lake Wingra. 2025 was the second year of the project and included 30 monitoring sites where paired brick samplers were deployed from piers throughout the summer. One brick was suspended in the water and the other rested on the lake bottom. We received more than 130 photos and observations from volunteers throughout the summer plus nearly 60 bricks for counting at the CFL afterwards.

Thank you to all the participants for your time and effort!



Bricks deployed from a volunteer's dock on Lake Monona, June 2025.

## Key findings from 2025:

- The total number of zebra mussel shells counted on all the bricks was 30,853. The average number of shells per brick was 523, whereas the median was 125.
- The largest number of mussel shells found on a single brick was 6,094, on a top brick from the CFL Hasler Lab on Lake Mendota.
- By lake, Mendota had the most mussel shells accumulated on the bricks, followed by Monona, Waubesa, Kegonsa, and Wingra.

- The bottom brick deployed in Lake Wingra had two shells on it, and the top had zero.
- 75% of all sites had more mussel shells accumulated on the top brick (the one dangling in the water column), whereas 25% of sites had more on the bottom brick (the one sitting on the bottom of the lake).

## Comparison to 2024:

- The maximum shells found on a single brick in 2025 was higher than in 2024, but the median number was lower in 2025 than 2024.
- Two mussel shells were found on the Wingra brick in 2025, compared to one (the first recorded) in 2024.
- More total mussel shells were found in 2025 than 2024, which was likely related to the paired versus single brick method.
- Like 2024, most of the individual shells were small in 2025.



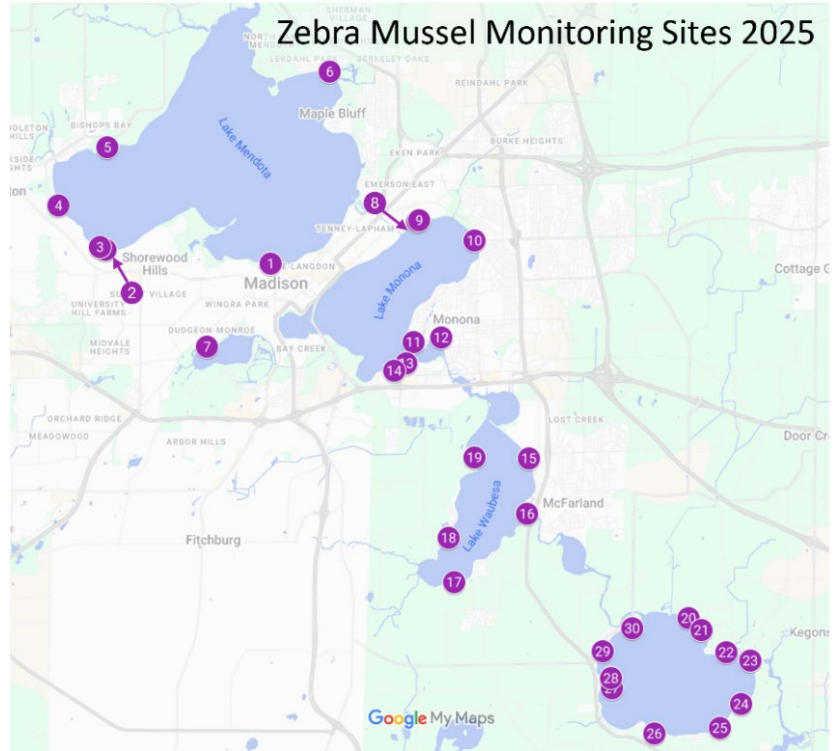
CFL student technicians count zebra mussels from the brick samplers.

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## Summary

The paired top and bottom brick samplers likely captured a more accurate and nuanced picture of the status of zebra mussels in the Yahara lakes. As the summer progressed at most sites, the floating bricks became embedded within aquatic plants. Zebra mussels also cling to plants and that may be a reason for the relatively higher number found on the top bricks, especially if the bottom was mucky. Volunteers also documented algal blooms on all four main lakes at various points throughout the season.

The average number of shells per site was highest in Mendota and decreased down the chain to Kegonsa. Wingra is not connected to Mendota and likely explains its low number. Ongoing data collection will better inform current trends and the scope of this invasive species in Madison's lakes.



2025 Cumulative Zebra Mussel Shell Counts by Site

