

DREISSENID MUSSELS: A NOVEL HABITAT FOR *ELLERBECKIA* IN THE LAURENTIAN GREAT LAKES?

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*Ellerbeckia arenaria* (Moore ex Ralfs) Crawford is usually described as an aerophil or occurring on the sandy bottoms of lakes. We have surveyed dreissenid mussels and their associated *Cladophora*-epiphyte assemblages along the western coast of Lake Michigan since 2004, but not until 2010 did we find *Ellerbeckia* growing on quagga mussels at two survey stations. Quagga mussels are now the dominant invasive dreissenid mussel in Lake Michigan. Their shells serve as substrates for a number of algal species and their associated epiphytes, but thus far *Ellerbeckia* has not been documented as an epizootic alga in the Laurentian Great Lakes or elsewhere. Quagga mussels have acted as ecological engineers in the Laurentian Great Lakes by enhancing light penetration to greater depths and by promoting phosphorus cycling close to the bottom. If *Ellerbeckia* populations ultimately respond positively via increased growth on mussel shells, this would be another instance of the benthification of lake food webs as a consequence of dreissenid mussel invasion.

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