



HABs Weekly Newsletter

A product of the 2021 Cayuga Lake HABs Monitoring Program

JUNE 2021

Photo of Myers Point by Bill Hecht

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HABs Refresher: What are Harmful Algal Blooms?

by CLWN Staff Intern Alora Cisneroz

As our community welcomes in the warmer summer months, recreation on Cayuga Lake explodes with activity. But boats and sunglasses aren't the only things exploding in number—so are Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs).

While many algae perform important roles in lake ecosystems and are harmless to humans and animals, some types of algal blooms produce cyanotoxins that can be dangerous. These types of blooms are dubbed Harmful Algal Blooms. If humans come into contact with these cyanotoxin-contaminated waters, they could experience skin, eye, nose, throat, and lung irritation. And if the cyanotoxin is consumed, the person could experience stomach pain, headache, dizziness, and vomiting. Animals like dogs, birds, cows, and fish can also get sick from HABs, and potentially die from too much exposure.

HABs Refresher

Typically, on Cayuga Lake we tend to see more instances of HABs in the warmer summer months because the hot temperatures, sunlight, and calm waters spur their growth. High nutrient concentrations in the lake water (primarily Nitrogen and Phosphorus) from fertilizer runoff is also a major contributor to the prevalence of HABs.

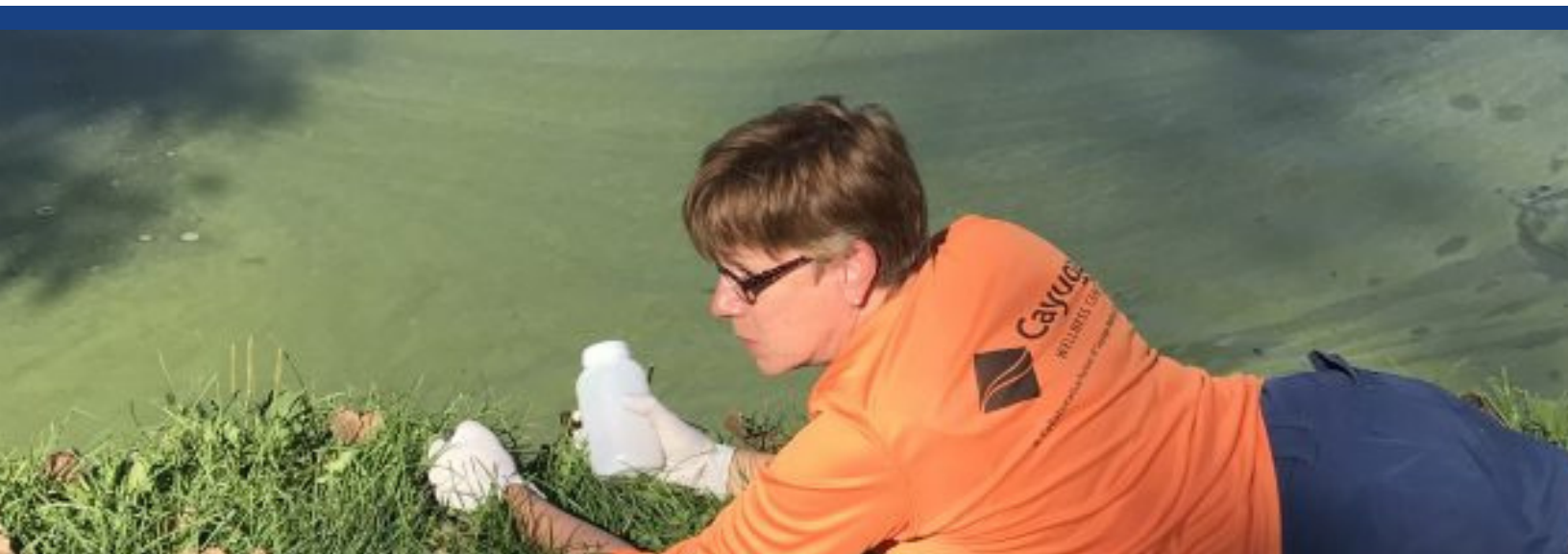
How can I tell if there's a HAB?

Importantly, not all HABs look the same. This means that you can't always tell from appearance whether there is a HAB, so if you suspect something, don't risk it! If the water smells bad (commonly described as rotten eggs), is discolored, has foam or scum, has like green or green/blue paint-like streaks on the water's surface, or has dead fish, don't go into the water. [Watch this video](#) to brush up on your HABs identification skills.

You can't always tell from appearance whether there is a HAB, so if you suspect something, don't risk it!

Cayuga Lake HABs Monitoring Program

To protect our community from the dangers of HABs, The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, The Community Science Institute, Discover Cayuga Lake, and a team of dedicated volunteers (called HABs Harriers) partner together to monitor Cayuga Lake's shoreline every week. If the harriers observe a suspicious bloom, they collect a sample and transport it to the Community Science Institute's laboratory in Ithaca. At the lab, the samples are tested for the presence and concentration of multiple kinds of cyanotoxins and the results are published within 24-72 hours on the [HABs reporting page](#). This extreme efficiency makes our monitoring program stand out from the other monitoring efforts across America. This year, the monitoring program is set to begin on June 27th and end on September 30th.



HABs Harrier, Deb Eichten, collecting a bloom sample in 2018.
Photo from CSI's website

2021 HABs Update

As it is still relatively early in the summer season, there have been no confirmed HABs so far. There was a report in early June of a bloom near the Village of Cayuga and because cyanobacteria were detected in the sample, there is a potential for the suspicious bloom to be harmful. However, large densities of pollen in the water complicate the situation as pollen at high densities can act as a confounding variable. As of now, the bloom is still being categorized as suspicious but not harmful. [The reporting page](#) will continue making updates as more information comes through on this bloom.

Opportunities to Get Involved

Even though you might think that HABs are an inevitable part of our reality, you are not powerless! If you want to help protect the health of your family, friends, neighbors, and ecosystem, there are a range of substantial things you can do!

Consider:

- ***Joining our Lake Friendly Living Program and taking the pledge to protect our water quality by adopting Lake Friendly Living practices at your home***
 - Adopt some or all of the [12 simple strategies for sustainable waterfront living!](#)
 - A presentation on the program will be integrated with the HABs Harrier training workshops this year if you want more guidance
- ***Becoming a volunteer HABs Harrier by attending or watching a recording of one of our orientation and training workshops.***
 - Recordings of the HABs Harrier training workshops can be found on [CSI's website under the "Resources" section.](#)
- ***Be willing to report a potential HAB that you see!***



How to Report a HAB

Another important way you can get involved to protect our community is by being a vigilant eye for our monitoring program. If you spot a suspicious bloom or potential HAB, please report it to us! You can [fill out this simple form](#) or email habshotline@gmail.com. We ask that you include as much information as possible such as GPS location/address and photos. Read the form's introduction to understand what is required for a submission.

FAQs

What is the HABs Monitoring Program?

The Cayuga Lake HABs Monitoring Program is a collaborative effort led by a local consortium of three nonprofits: the Community Science Institute (CSI), the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network (CLWN), and Discover Cayuga Lake (DCL), working in collaboration with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Through this monitoring program, we seek to protect public health, water quality, and the larger ecosystem from HABs.

How can I know if there is a HAB near me?

The fastest way is to [look at our HABs Reporting Page](#), which provides an updated map with all the critical information. NY's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) also [maintains a HABs map](#). This email newsletter will also communicate any reported HABs for the past week.

Where can I report a potential HAB?

Use [this form](#) or email habshotline@gmail.com. Please be sure to include all of the information required: personal information (your name, email, and phone number), bloom information (observation date and time and location of the bloom), and two pictures (one close up to show bloom composition and one from far away to show bloom extent).

If I have more questions, who can I contact?

[Cayuga Lake Watershed Network \(CLWN\)](#)

CLWN Executive Director,
Hilary Lambert:
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607-319-0475

[Community Science Institute \(CSI\)](#)

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[Discover Cayuga Lake \(DCL\)](#) (607) 327-5253



Sketch of Cayuga Lake from the 1866 book "Scenery of Ithaca and the Head Waters of the Cayuga". A good reminder of the enduring beauty of our lake and the importance of maintaining it for future generations.