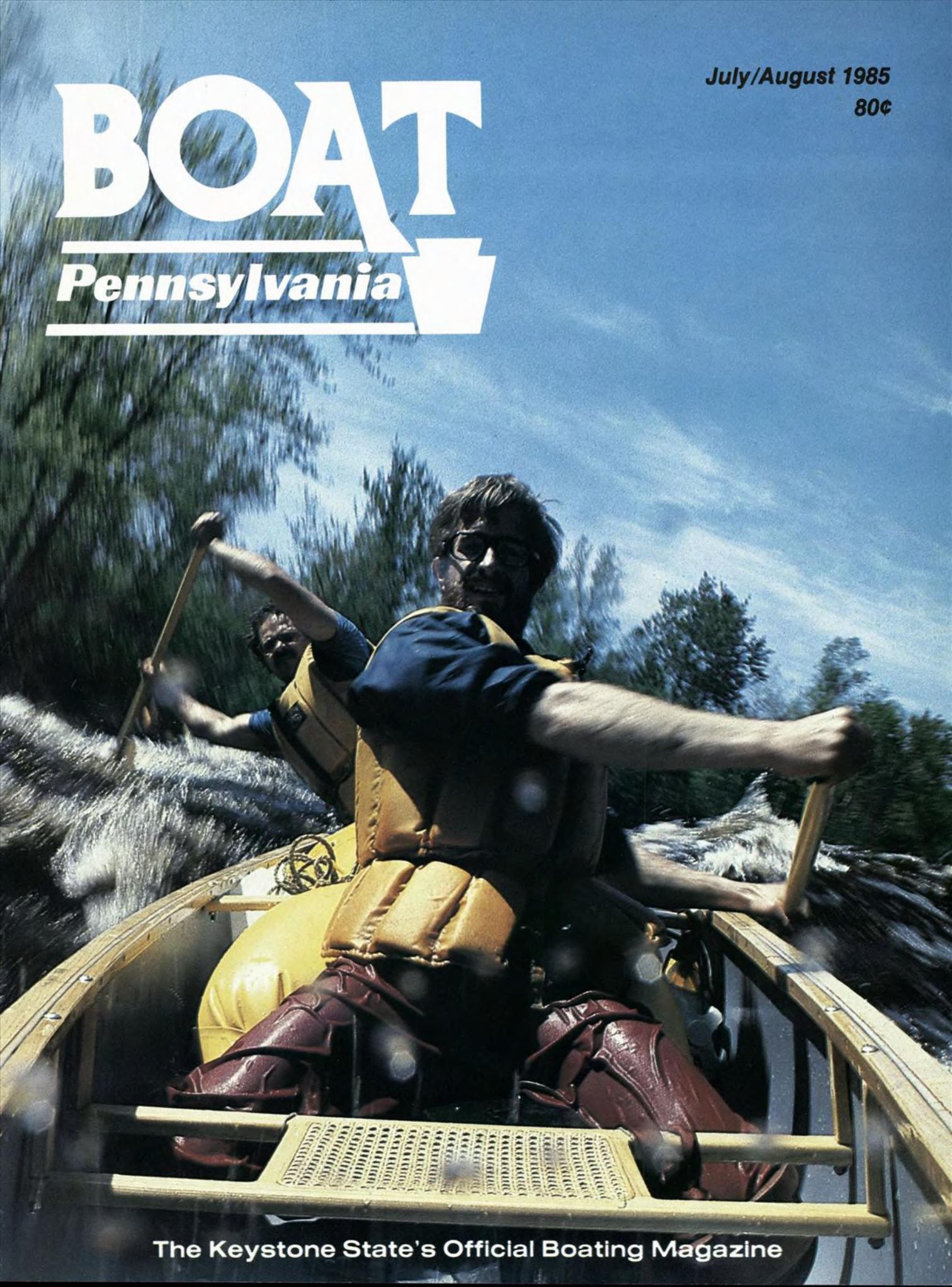


BOAT

Pennsylvania

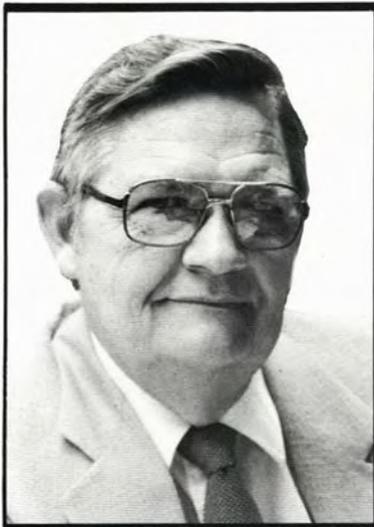
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The Keystone State's Official Boating Magazine

Hydrilla: Pennsylvania Waterway Threat



Gene Spori
Assistant Executive Director
Bureau of Waterways
Pennsylvania Fish Commission

It probably all began when someone decided to clean his tropical fish tank, and dumped its contents in a backwater canal in southern Florida. That act released a pesky water plant that is now threatening the fresh waters as far north as the Potomac River in Maryland, and is costing the state of Florida alone some \$2.2 million a year to control.

This plant's name is hydrilla. Hydrilla forms dense mats of vegetation on a waterway's surface. Penetrating the mats of growth is practically impossible, so swimming, boating, fishing, and water skiing become dangerous and difficult, if not impossible. When hydrilla establishes itself in a waterway, control or eradication becomes nearly impossible. Controlling infestations costs some \$400 per acre, and usually, more than one treatment per year is required.

What makes hydrilla so insidious is that it is almost identical in appearance to an innocent and often beneficial water plant also common to tropical fish tanks and fresh waters. This plant is known as elodea. The two plants are so similar, it's been said that a federal agency actually planted hydrilla in one area thinking it was elodea.

Hydrilla is most hardy. It can survive in brackish water with up to 35 percent salt water, and water temperatures down to 55°F. The best growing depth is in waters 10 to 15 feet deep, making many Pennsylvania lakes susceptible.

Hydrilla looks very much like other water ferns, but its stems and leaves are much more coarse and the leaves are serrated. Its roots run rapidly along a mud bottom, implanting themselves and starting new growth. In late summer or early fall, a very small white flower appears.

Hydrilla can reproduce in many ways. One of the more common ways of spreading is hitch hiking on trailerable boats. This is the primary way that the plant can spread from one watershed to another. Wash your boat thoroughly after each use, particularly if you've been boating in waters south of us. This precaution greatly reduces the chances of hydrilla becoming a problem in Pennsylvania.

Finally, tell others about the threat, and watch for signs of hydrilla in lakes and streams. Keeping hydrilla out of Pennsylvania ensures our continued enjoyment of Pennsylvania waterways.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, which appears to read "Gene Spori".

BOAT

Pennsylvania

July/August Vol. 2 No. 4

This issue's front cover, photographed by R. Hamilton Smith, shows paddlers who might wish they had read the article beginning on page 12 of this issue before venturing out. Also, powerboaters won't want to miss the articles starting on pages 18 and 30, and sailors will want to check out pages 8 and 28. All boaters will find informative the material on pages 14 and 20.



Heading up page 8



Looking out page 26

Canoeing in the Rain by Cliff Jacobson
Soak up these ideas and you might just enjoy wet-weather paddling 4

Six Small-Boat Sailing Secrets
by John Kauffman
Maximizing speed and keeping your balance are essential to sailing faster and more efficiently ... 8

A New Kayak Deck Plate
by Leann R. Diehl
This recent invention may someday save your life 12

Pennsylvania Boaters and Waterways Conservation Officers by Gary E. Deiger
Here's an insider's look into a special Fish Commission area 14

Summer Powerboat Maintenance by Eric B. Burnley
Prevent breakdowns during heavy use with these ideas 18

Southeastern Pennsylvania's Mecca for Boaters by Tom Reinke
Lake Nockamixon, in northern Bucks County, offers boaters special opportunities 20

Tips for Safer Water Skiing by Larry Shaffer
Having fun means heeding all the safety requirements 26

Would You Like to Cruise Lake Erie? by Gus Neuss, Jr.
The author spells out the essentials for cruising to distant Lake Erie ports 28

Swimming from Your Boat by Virgil Chambers
Go ahead and take the plunge—but only in the appropriate spots and with reasonable safety precautions 30

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Viewpoint 2
Currents 22
The Law & You 22
Calendar 23

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