

Snails of Higgins Lake

(Average actual size shown)

Carry Swimmer's Itch



Stagnicola sp.



Physa sp.

Most common snail found
in Higgins Lake

Do NOT carry Swimmer's Itch



Campeloma sp.



Pleurocera sp.
(*Goniobasis sp.*)



Helisoma sp.

Snail FAQs

Q: How many different species of snails are there on Higgins Lake?

A: We have found five so far:

One is flat and looks like a ram's horn.

One is black and looks like a skinny ice cream cone.

One is dark brown and very round with 3 brown stripes.

Two are grey with a white stripe.

Q: Which ones carry the swimmer's itch parasite?

A: The two greyish ones. Look for a white stripe somewhere on the snail. If you can find one, then it's probably a species that can carry the swimmer's itch parasite.

Q: Are you sure there are two different species of grey snails? They both look the same to me.

A: The important thing to know is that both species can carry the swimmer's itch parasite. If you really want to tell the difference between the two species, then hold the snail with the point of the shell up. Turn the shell in your fingers until you see the opening where the snail lives. If the shell opens up to the **left**, then it's *Physa sp.* If the shell opens up to the **right**, then it's *Stagnicola sp.*

Q: Where do the ones that carry the swimmer's itch parasite live?

A: Both snail species that can carry the swimmer's itch parasite love to hang out in sandy-bottom areas of the lake where the water is very clear and 1 to 3 feet deep. They don't like areas with a lot of rocks or cobble.

Q: If I physically remove all the grey snails in the water around my dock and property, will I get less swimmer's itch?

A: In theory, yes. Fewer snails in your area potentially means fewer parasites. But cercariae (the larval form of the parasite that comes out of the snail) move, and they can be carried with the waves up to a mile or more. We are conducting experiments this summer that should tell us how effective manual snail remove can be at reducing the number of cercariae in an immediate area. Stay tuned.