ANNAPOLIS COUNTY SPECTATOR

Growth of blue-green algae across Nova Scotia a concern: Dal AC prof

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Cyanobacteria blooms, or blue-green algae, has been the focus of Dr. Tri Nguyen-Quang's research at the Dalhousie Agricultural Campus for the past few years. The problem is growing, says Nguyen-Quang, who has seen the blooms well into January in some places.
Photos by Submitted

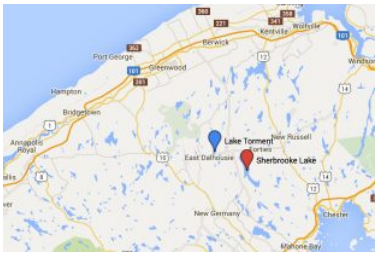
TC MEDIA - With results of recent research, Dr. Tri Nguyen-Quang's concern about algae blooms continues to grow.

Nguyen-Quang, a professor of engineering at the Dalhousie Agricultural Campus, has been researching cyanobacteria blooms - blue-green algae - in Nova Scotia for several years. Lately, results based on research last summer have become more worrisome.

"It's blooming everywhere," said Nguyen-Quang. "We looked at three or four lakes in Nova Scotia. In Mattatall Lake, there were a lot of blooms, some are persisting until December."

Nguyen-Quan has studied algae blooms in western Nova Scotia at Lake Torment and Sherbrooke Lake.
Google Maps

Nguyen-Quang and his team also visited Lake Torment (http://www.kingscountynews.ca/News/Local/2014-06-27/article-3779513/Lake-Torment-in-East-Dalhousie-closed-due-to-possible-blue-green-algae/1)in Kings County and Sherbrooke Lake in Lunenburg County There, blooms were small and lasted until about the beginning of September.



"It's a very interesting phenomenon. In other places, blooms stop usually in August to September - the latest blooms found were in November (in New Brunswick). But in Mattatall Lake, blooms have been found in winter and some even in January. They're co-habiting with the ice."

A major concern is how things will progress this summer.

"Cyanobacteria blooms are unpredictable. We want to sensitize people in all scales to the issue. With global warming and high eutrophication, the situation is going to get worse and worse, and this summer could have many unstable scenarios due to the El Niño cycle."

Eutrophication is when the environment becomes enriched with nutrients, such as those containing nitrogen and phosphorous; eutrophication encourages algae growth, or algae bloom.

Most of the blooms Nguyen-Quang and his team found are of toxic species. According to literary reviews, the researcher says, they can affect humans' neurological and digestive systems, as well as those of animals. Drinking water has to be a major consideration, especially when there is no schematic study pertaining to blooms in Nova Scotia.

With around 3,000 lakes throughout Nova Scotia, Nguyen-Quang and his team can't visit each annually to track cyanobacteria blooms, so the researcher hopes to see the creation of a lakes association.

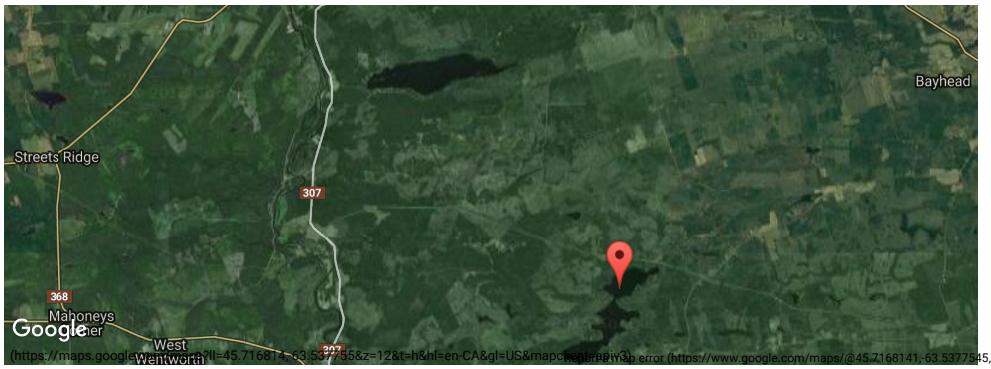
"If we had a big association, there are many things we could do - share information, get involved with the government and ask for funding. It's worked very well in New Brunswick," he said. "I think so far, that's the best solution. We need collaboration from different scales, especially government. If not, we have a problem and we'll never have an end."

The blooms in Nova Scotia have mostly been green. Around the world, they could be also be red.

"In Mattatall Lake, in some bloom episodes they were brown - they were dying, too. But when the lake turns green, that's a problem," he said.

Anyone finding cyanobacteria blooms, or any algae they aren't familiar with, can contact Dr. Tri Nguyen-Quang. Two of the lakes his team visited last summer were at the request of an area resident.

He can be reached at 902-896-4480 or Tri.Nguyen-Quang@dal.ca (mailto:Tri.Nguyen-Quang@dal.ca)



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