

## Kokanee Salmon Sheet 5

In the early 1980s, the opossum shrimp (*Mysis relicta*) were introduced to Swan, Ashley and Whitefish Lakes as a method to increase the kokanee salmon population. Because of the interconnected water systems and the fact that aquatic animals travel on boats, fishing gear, etc., the shrimp made their way into Flathead Lake.



*Mysis relicta* (up to 2.5 cm in length)

*Mysis relicta* stay on the lake bottom during the day and migrate to the surface at night, taking advantage of the colder, deeper waters. As they move to the surface, they bring along other plankton, moving the food source from the depths to nearer the surface, benefitting the fish that live in shallower water. After *Mysis relicta* was introduced, it was discovered that many of the cladoceran and copepod populations, types of zooplankton, decreased. Since the introduction of the opossum shrimp, the population of bulltrout and cutthroat trout have also declined, leaving the lake trout the predominant specie in Flathead Lake.

### Discussion Questions:

1. List questions posed by your group.
2. What new evidence is presented and does it explain the decrease in the kokanee salmon population?
3. What effect did the introduction of *Mysis relicta* have on the fish population in Flathead Lake?
4. You now have all the pieces to tell the story of the loss of kokanee salmon in Flathead Lake...can you complete it?
5. What additional questions does this information raise?