

Arkansas Aquatic Nuisance Species

Arkansas also has several aquatic nuisance species. Among the most common are the: Northern snakehead, silver carp and zebra mussel.

Snakeheads are a fish much like a bowfin or grinnel. The snakehead originated in Asia and is a major food fish in that part of the world. They are capable of breathing air and can go dormant in the mud during drought. They can live out of water for up to three days in a moist environment and can move short distances on land using their pectoral fins. The snakeheads were imported to Arkansas by private farmers as a commercial crop. The fish were inadvertently released into an irrigation ditch in Monroe county. The result was an expanding population of the fish in the Piney Creek watershed near Brinkley.

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission conducted a large-scale eradication in October of 2009. Eradication was necessary for several reasons: The snakehead is a voracious top predator that eats most fish species, are strong competitors with other fish species, can tolerate Arkansas water temperatures year-round, can spawn up to five times a year, and thrive in delta environments with sluggish water, in vegetation, in undercut banks and in low oxygen. All of this adds up to a very hearty fish that can reproduce enough to crowd out our Arkansas native species.

You can view or print a snakehead poster from this CD!

Silver carp were brought to Arkansas by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to try to convert the nutrients in sewage treatment lagoons into usable biomass. The problem with silver carp is they have a tendency to jump out of the water. Unfortunately, vibrations from boat motors seem to trigger the jumping and motoring through silver carp infested waters can become dangerous when 20 pound fish are jumping out of the water and sometimes into the boat. The numbers of silver carp has greatly increased in some areas over the last few years and are now causing problems.

Zebra mussels are small and hatchet-shaped with alternating light and dark bands of various arrangements. They attach to hard surfaces such as boats, turtles and crayfish. They clog water inlets and compete with native mussels for food. Zebra mussels were introduced into the Great Lakes in 1988 where their population densities reached several thousand mussels per square meter. They were found in Lake Dardanelle in 1992 and can now be found in the Mississippi River, White River, lower St. Francis River, Bull Shoals Lake and Plum Bayou in Arkansas.

To learn more about these and other Arkansas Aquatic Nuisance Species and how to prevent the spread of them visit:

http://www.agfc.com!/userfiles/pdfs/newsletters/nongame_aquatics/LR2008Apr-Jun.pdf