

## Asian Carp Invasion of the Great Lakes

The Asian carp invasion of the Great Lakes is something that is very alarming. Asian carps are not native to the United States and to reach the Great Lakes these fish had to do some lengthy traveling. It is reported that these fish started in the Mississippi River and worked their way up to Illinois. There is not clear evidence that the Asian carp is in the Great Lakes as of right now, however keeping them from reaching Lake Michigan is essential. Asian carps are detrimental to the ecosystems in which they have invaded. They feed off the plankton that native fishes need in order to survive.<sup>1</sup> This floor grubbing fish is adversely taking away the food supply from plankton eating fish like the gizzard shad and the bigmouth buffalo.<sup>2</sup> The reason why Asian carps eating native fish's plankton is because of the massive amounts of it they can eat. Asian carps can eat from twenty to up to one hundred and twenty percent of their body weight in plankton.<sup>3</sup> The reason this is so alarming is because of the massive size they can grow up to. The silver carp, which is believed to be the biggest of the Asian carps, can weigh up to sixty pounds.<sup>4</sup> These fish are known for jumping out of water and while in midair they can swell up to around one hundred pounds.<sup>5</sup>

The reason the Asian carp invasion of the Great Lakes is so important to Michigan is because it could potentially ruin the ecosystems in our lakes. As previously stated the Asian Carp is a massive fish that feeds off of massive amounts of plankton. If this fish were to get into Lake Michigan it could potentially wipe out other plankton eating fish. Another reason why it is so important to keep them out is because these fish can travel. They have already made their way up the Mississippi River and into Illinois, so there is no reason why they will not continue further. If a large number of these fish reach Lake Michigan there is no telling what could happen. They could potentially keep traveling through the lake and reach Lake Huron, then down to Lake Erie, and then to Lake Ontario. By traveling throughout the Great Lakes they would plummet the ecosystems and throw all of them into a limbo.

Steps have already been made in cities near Lake Michigan with large electric fences blocking off sections of the river in order to prevent the Asian carps from moving upstream. However this fences are not one hundred percent effective and a new plan needs to be put in place in order to stop these fish.

I would like to further exam Lake Michigan and how prevention of these fish is going to happen. As noted in the paragraph before there are steps that are beginning to happen, but the Asian carp has proved that it is up for the task. After fighting upstream against the Mississippi River I do not believe that electric barriers will be enough to stop them. I would like to find out what other options are being looked in order to stop them. I would like to research and find out how much money is being used in order to prevent them from reaching and spreading across Lake Michigan and the other Great Lakes. These fish could potentially ruin one of Michigan's most notable features, and it would be a damn shame if they did. The Asian carp needs to be stopped before it reaches Michigan and destroys our Great Lakes ecosystem.

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<sup>1</sup> Sandra L. Cook and Walter R. Hill, *Can Filter-feeding Carp Invade the Laurentian Great Lakes?* (Champaign, Fresh Water Biology, 2010) 2139.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 2139.

<sup>3</sup> Newsdesk, . PBS, "Keeping Asian Carp out of Great Lakes." Last modified January 06, 2014, 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.