

## Asian Carp

A majority of organisms on the planet do something both good for the environment and harm our environment. As humans, we waste energy, burn fossil fuels, don't recycle regularly and much more. But on the contrary us humans also plant trees, hunt off over populated animals and have growing technology that can potentially prevent further danger to the environment. In 1970, a species called Asian carp were imported to the United States, specifically to Arkansas with reason to filter water on farms<sup>1</sup>. But today, Asian carp are spreading much rapidly throughout the entire country and are doing more bad for our environment than expected. It is now a huge fear that Asian carp will leak into the Great Lakes .

There are two most common types of Asian carp; there are Bighead carp which are native to China and Silver carp which is native to China, Russia and Vietnam<sup>2</sup>. These carp species are prized over their ability to eat plankton and algae from catfish farms along with consuming waste as a sewage treatment<sup>2</sup>. Bringing them over to the US seemed like a great idea until Asian carp became destructive and harmful to freshwater ecosystems.

Although there are positives to the Asian carp, there are too many negatives that outweigh them. This carp is out- competing the native fish population and pushing them out or eliminating them<sup>1</sup>. They are also lowering water levels which are killing off sensitive freshwater organisms such as native muscels that are good to filter and purify fresh water regions<sup>2</sup>. Silver carp also are notorious to be "flying fish." These fish will fly out of the water and can be dangerous for the wellbeing of humans and also can be destructive to boat equipment<sup>2</sup>.

So why do Asian Carps have anything to do with Michigan? 1980s, a decade after Asian Carp were brought to Arkansas, major flooding caused Asian carp to drain into the Mississippi River<sup>2</sup>. As Asian Carp reproduce at an intense rate and are spreading rapidly throughout the entire country, they are making their way North up the Mississippi toward the Chicago region and are a huge threat to the Great Lakes.

Many Michiganders find themselves along Great Lake's coastal lines especially in the summertime as a vacation hot spot. In mid-July, especially Lake Michigan and Lake Huron are full of fishers, boaters, swimmers, jet- skiers and tubing. What will happen if the great lakes are filled with millions of Asian Carp, flying around in the air and dominating other fish species? The Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee is supported on behalf of federal, state and local agencies. This group goes to sites where Asian carp may be a threat and collects samples to test for any eDNA (Environmental DNA). Since the start of their testing and experimentation in 2009, data was shown positive eDNA for Chicago area waterway system and is charted at

---

<sup>1</sup> National Wildlife Federation. 2012. "Asian Carp Threat to the Great Lakes." Threats to Wildlife. Feb 16,2014 <https://www.nwf.org/Wildlife/Threats-to-Wildlife/Invasive-Species/Asian-Carp.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Krause, Austin. " Biodiversity." Lecture from Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI, January 27,2014

increasing levels annually<sup>3</sup>. Luckily, the coordinating committee has yet to find eDNA in the Great Lakes. Although there are other ways Asian carp can flood into the Great Lakes, the path through the Chicago waterways is at highest risk.

Michigan is famous for their five great freshwater lakes. Will this invasive species potentially ruin a great part of Michigan? The country comes together to try and come up with ideas to make Asian carp useful due to their abundance, and also come up with ways to keep it out of all the Great Lakes for good. As of now, projects to keep the carp out are costly, well around \$15 billion or more <sup>2</sup>. The time span for projects can also take years and even decades to complete. But can the Michigan ecosystem dare to wait that long and hope the Asian carp will stay out? If something is going to be done, it needs to be done fast.

I would like to look more closely at comparing the Illinois/ Chicago water way system to a region along Lake Michigan such as Ludington. For the Chicago area, I want to look at the different plans they may have to get Asian carp out. For regions along Lake Michigan, what is their plan and execution to keep the Asian carp out of all the Great Lakes.

#### Bibliography

ACRCC (Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee). 2012. "eDNA. Asiancarp.us. February 16, 2014 <http://www.asiancarp.us/edna.htm>

Krause, Austin. "Biodiversity." Lecture from Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI, January 27, 2014

National Wildlife Federation. 2012. "Asian Carp Threat to the Great Lakes." Threats to Wildlife. Feb 16, 2014 <https://www.nwf.org/Wildlife/Threats-to-Wildlife/Invasive-Species/Asian-Carp.aspx>

---

<sup>3</sup> ACRCC (Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee). 2012. "eDNA. Asiancarp.us. February 16, 2014 <http://www.asiancarp.us/edna.htm>