

Asian Carp in the Great Lakes

There is a fear that the Asian carp will soon be finding its way into the freshwaters of the Great Lakes. Asian carp are very large fish, and are categorized into four different species. First there is the Bighead carp, which weighs up to ninety pounds, with a very large head and toothless mouth. Second, is the Black carp which have large scales with dark edges. Next, there is the Grass carp that also have large scales and a lighter body. The last species is the Silver carp, which are known for their light silver color and white belly, weighing about sixty pounds. In August 2011, it was reported that genetic testing showed twenty-two possible hits for Silver carp right off of the Mississippi River.¹ The Bighead and Silver carp were first brought to the US in the 1970's in order to clear wastewater treatment centers and ponds of algae.² During flood events, these carps escaped into the Mississippi Basin, where populations have grown. If Asian carp can find their way through the St. Anthony Falls dam and gain access to the upper Mississippi River; they will have no problem reaching Lake Superior. There have also been findings of thirty potential pathways from other states that carps could use to get into the fresh water of the Great Lakes. Even more recent, three of these carps were found in a park lagoon located just off of the Great Lakes in Chicago.

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Because the carp are in the Chicago area, Lake Michigan would be the first of the five Great Lakes to be affected. There are many rivers and canals that flow into this Great Lake. If many of these species of fish find their way into Lake Michigan, it would wipe out most of the other wildlife found in this lake. Not only in Lake Michigan, but eventually the rest of the Great Lakes as well. Friends of the Earth and Natural Resources Defense Council, along with many other environmental groups, believe the only solution is to put into place a permanent barrier.³ This would separate the Chicago Sanitary from Lake Michigan, but there would be confidence that the Asian carps would not enter Lake Michigan or any of the other Great Lakes.

1. Rachel Gleason, "Asian carp push Great Lakes invasion through Minnesota", Great Lakes Echo, August 11 2011, <http://greatlakesecho.org/2011/08/11/asian-carp-inch-closer-to-great-lakes-dna-shows-new-invasion-path-through-minnesota/>.

2. Adrian Burton, "The Great Lakes Carp Lockout", *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (February 2010) : p. 6, <http://0-www.jstor.org.catalog.lib.cmich.edu/stable/20696395>

3. Brita Bella, "Closing off the carp." *E* Jan.-Feb. 2012: 7, *Environmental Studies and Policy*, Web, 17 Feb. 2014, <http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE>

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