

The silver carp reproduction explosion can cause legal ramifications for fishermen

About five years ago, adult silver carp were first noticed in the Kansas River, leaping high in the air and endangering boaters. These non-native fish have a peculiar habit of leaping completely out of the water as a motorboat passes over, but their presence threatens more than boaters. Silver carp, along with the bighead carp, are extremely prolific breeders and threaten channel catfish, bass, walleye, crappie, all native game fish as well as bait fish anywhere they are spread.

High water this spring has made the situation worse, creating a reproductive explosion of these fish, which, in addition to endangering native species, are illegal to possess alive. Biologists from the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks are monitoring the situation, but without the help of responsible anglers, things could get much worse. As of Aug. 2, young-of-the-year (2 to 3 inches long) Asian carp were "stacked up by the hundreds of thousands" below Johnson County Water One Coffee Dam, according to Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks aquatic nuisance specialist Jason Goeckler.

"I've never seen anything like this," the seasoned biologist said. "The water is just loaded with them. You can stick a dip net in and pull up 100 or more at a time, and our real concern is that because they could easily be mistaken for shad or other minnows anglers will put them in their bait buckets and take them to other waters."

Later that day, Goeckler and staff checked the Bowersock Dam

at Lawrence and found more bighead carp. Although not in the same densities, they could easily be caught, and adult silver carp could be seen leaping into the falls. Asian carp were also reported congregating below the dam at Atchison State Fishing Lake.

Just putting these fish in a bait bucket is illegal. Silver carp and bighead carp are on the state list of species that are illegal to import, possess, or release alive in Kansas. That means they cannot be kept if taken in a seine, put in a bait bucket, or used for bait unless they are killed first. Violation is a Class C misdemeanor punishable by up to 30 days in jail and a \$500 fine.

While many anglers seine their own bait, few can readily identify one "minnow" from another. But it's easy to learn. Go online to Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.state.ks.us, then click "<<http://www.Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.state.ks.us/news/Fishing/Aquatic-Nuisance-Species/Aquatic-Nuisance-Species-List/Asian-Carp>>Fishing/Aquatic Nuisance Species/Aquatic Nuisance Species List/Asian Carp." Here you'll find pictures and detailed descriptions of the fish, as well as a link to a video on Asian carp by famous angler Bill Dance. Dance discusses not only how to identify the fish but the dangers

of their spread. This page also contains links to <<http://www.asiancarp.org/Wordpress/>>Asian carp management and a <<http://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/FactSheet.aspx?speciesID=549>>silver carp fact sheet, as well as information on other aquatic nuisance species, including an online education certification course to help viewers understand the issue and how to prevent spread of these species.

It is illegal for anglers to move bait from any body of water to another, and if anglers don't comply with this regulation, it will be more than a "nuisance" for them and their sport. Anglers could be destroying the thing they love most. Asian carp feed on plankton, algae, and aquatic insects. They are not sport fish and are rarely caught on hook and line.

Kansas anglers need to educate themselves about these destructive fish and take the necessary steps to prevent their spread. Currently, Asian carp can be found in the Big Blue, Kansas, Missouri, and Wakarusa rivers in Kansas. Any streams that connect to the Kansas or Missouri river will likely contain these fish, so use extreme caution with bait in these areas.

Remember to learn to identify Asian carp because it's illegal to possess them alive. You can seine your own bait, but legal bait fish can only be used in the waters where they were caught it's illegal to move bait fish from one water to another. Asian carp have the potential to take over a fishery and destroy populations of desirable native fish.



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