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Osage County Angler Catches 112-pound Invasive Black Carp

MARCH 10TH 2021 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Black carp is one of the few fish species listed on Missouri's Prohibited Species list.

An Osage County man got a surprise last week after catching a 112-pound invasive black carp from the Osage River. The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) has listed black carp on the Prohibited Species List – a list of species that may not be imported, exported, transported, sold, purchased, or possessed alive in Missouri without written approval of the director.

Jesse Hughes of Bonnots Mill was originally catfishing with friends March 4 when he hooked into the fish.

“We hooked into it and knew it was something big, but I originally thought it was a catfish,” Hughes recalled. “It was the first I'd heard of a black carp. I didn't know anything about it, so this has been quite the learning experience.”

According to MDC, black carp are an invasive fish from Asia that eat mussels and snails. The fish damage populations of native mollusks, many of which are critically endangered. There is a strong possibility the species is becoming established, with breeding populations, on our continent.

Black carp have been found in the Mississippi River system, including the Osage River, where in 1994 about 30 reportedly escaped from a fish farm during a high-water event

and entered that river.

Most of the black carp in the United States were introduced to control problematic snail populations in commercial fisheries, and these individuals are presumably sterile. Yet fertile individuals can be present, too. Given that black carp can live for 15 years, even the sterile individuals can present a serious long-term problem for native mollusk populations.

“If anglers happen to catch black carp, or any invasive fish, while fishing in Missouri waters, it’s imperative to contact their local conservation agent,” explained MDC Fisheries Programs Specialist Andrew Branson. “That way, our Fisheries staff can be notified and monitor the spread of these destructive species.”

The black carp caught by Hughes is currently being studied by the United States Geological Survey.

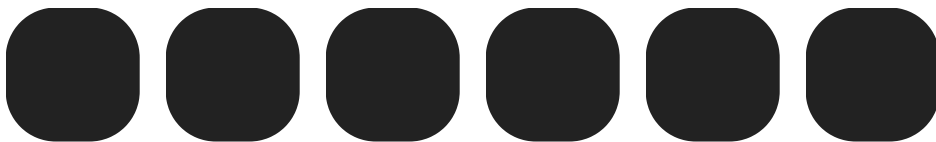
“It’s a little disappointing, as I don’t think I’ll ever catch a fish that big again,” joked Hughes. “But at least it’s one less invasive fish in Missouri waters.”

Black carp appear similar to the common grass carp, but the black carp is darker, though not truly black, and some report the adult black carp have a relatively narrower snout. It also has large pharyngeal teeth, or throat teeth, that resemble human molars. These teeth are used to crush the shells of mollusk and prey.

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