



COOPERATIVE ENDEAVOR ASSESSES APPLE SNAIL POPULATION ON PRIVATE LAND NORTH OF HOUMA

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) and the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) teamed up April 22 to remove apple snails and assess the level of infestation on a landowner's property a few miles west of Shriever.

Apple snails are an invasive aquatic species from South America. They were first discovered in Louisiana in 2006 near Gretna and have since been found in several water bodies within the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary.

Apple snails cause damage to the marshes and swamps by out-competing native species for resources because of their large size, and the ability to quickly populate. They consume large quantities of plant material, which damages native fish and other aquatic organisms habitats. They are also an invasive species to Southeast Asia, and have become a major source of crop damage to rice farmers there.

Shriever resident and fisherman Douglas Rhodes first reported seeing the apple snail last winter. The snails' presence was confirmed by Michael Massimi, the BTNEP's Invasive Species Coordinator in late January of this year. "The apple snail could pose a real threat to the ecological balance of the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary System," said Massimi. "As the potential impacts are largely unknown, it is important to act quickly."

LDWF Aquatic Nuisance Species Coordinator Brac Salyers said, "Because of how fast this species could take hold, and the fact that we don't know the size of the problem we have right now, we'd rather act quickly than wait. This effort is half removal and half finding out the size of



Photo by Adam Einck

Apple snails leave pink colored egg masses just above the water line. Their eggs can be scraped or knocked into the water to prevent them from hatching.

this population. If we find a lot more here than we think, we'll have to start immediately planning a much bigger removal."

Apple snails were most likely introduced into Louisiana through aquarium owner releases. They have also been found in Florida and Texas.

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SPRING SQUIRREL SEASON SET TO BEGIN MAY 3

If the fall hunting season seems too far away, then hunters should utilize the spring squirrel season this May to attain their hunting fix and carry them through the summer.

In 2008, the spring squirrel season will run from May 3 to 25 on private lands and from May 3-11 on the Bodcau, Boeuf, Clear Creek, Little River, Maurepas Swamp (East Tract), Russell Sage and Sherburne Wildlife Management Areas. The daily bag limit is three with a possession limit of 6.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) created the spring squirrel season last year to give hunters more opportunities to get into the woods.

“The spring squirrel season gives hunters another chance to hunt with or without dogs, which is always a good

thing,” said LDWF Biologist Manager Fred Kimmel. “Since using dogs for the spring squirrel season is allowed and encouraged, using this time to train squirrel dogs is also a great way to keep your dogs in hunting shape year round.”

Kimmel also points out that hunters need to be aware of the many differences between the spring and fall squirrel hunting seasons.

--Fall squirrel hunters are used to hunting around trees that produce in the fall such as the hard mast trees like oak and hickory. However, during the spring, hunters should look for trees that produce a soft mast such as mulberry or trees that have flowers or buds.

--Hunters may do better by moving quietly and looking for active squirrels during the spring as opposed to the sit

and wait method practiced during the fall, because trees will be full of leaves and will provide cover to help hunters quietly stalk squirrels.

--In addition to looking for trees with fruits and flowers, hunters may want to key on active den trees.

--Hunters that use dogs should bring plenty of water since it will be warmer than the fall season.

--Hunters should also bring insect repellent.

The spring squirrel season will be closed in the Kisatchie National Forest, on National Wildlife Refuges, Wildlife Management Areas not listed above and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property.

For more information, contact Fred Kimmel at 225-765-2355.

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They are among the largest freshwater snails with golden-yellow to dark brown shells and range from 2 to 4 inches across, with the largest one reaching 6 inches in diameter.

Most people will only see their bright pink egg clusters of 200 to 600 eggs attached to trees or other structures just above the waterline. Egg masses can simply be scraped off the structures and allowed to fall into the water where they become inundated with water and become infertile.

“The public can help us a lot by reporting any infestations they see, or removing the eggs themselves and dropping them in the water,” said Salyers. “The biggest problem with the aquarium trade business is that in most cases they don't inform the

public of the potential problem of releasing these non-native species in the wild. Properly disposing of non-native aquarium life forms would help prevent the spread of snails, fish and plants into Louisiana waterways.”



If consumed raw, apple snails can possibly transmit many diseases, including a deadly parasite called rat lungworm, to humans and other mammals. However, there is no risk of illness from touching egg masses or the shell, but gloves or other protective equipment should be used when removing the egg masses.

For more information, contact LDWF Aquatic Nuisance Species Coordinator Brac Salyers at 225-765-2641 or bsalyers@wlf.louisiana.gov.



L.D.W.F. AQUATIC PLANT PROGRAM TARGETS LAKE BISTINEAU

The LDWF Inland Fisheries Division is working to regain control of aquatic plants on Lake Bistineau in northwest Louisiana. The goal is to kill a significant amount of giant salvinia and restore normal use and aesthetics of the lake for residents and visitors.



Photo by Adam Einck

During the week of April 7-11, 17 LDWF spray crews attacked the giant salvinia problem on Lake Bistineau.

“We have brought numerous resources to the lake this week in an effort to open up the surface of the water body for all who spend time on the lake,” said LDWF Secretary Robert Barham. “The treatment of invasive aquatics will remain a major commitment for this agency in the months and years ahead.”

LDWF's Aquatic Plant Control Program is utilizing a portion of the \$6.4 million allocated in the 2007-08 fiscal year to aggressively combat a major threat to the state's waterways. Seventeen two-man spray crews are on Lake Bistineau as part of the five-day herbicide application project. Applications to floating mats of giant salvinia utilize Aquamaster, a glyphosate herbicide. The EPA-approved systemic herbicide translocates through the plant and results should be noted in a week to 10 days.

“Property owners on Lake Bistineau have seen diminished esthetic and property values,” said Sen. Robert Adley (Dist. 36). “Restoring the quality of the lake experience for residents

and state park visitors is a dual benefit for the area economy. Controlling these aquatic plants is, and should be, a priority statewide.”

The 17,200-acre lake just south of Doyline is a popular fishing spot for bass and crappie with private dwellings and Lake Bistineau State Park offering lakeside accommodations. OSP is working with LDWF by housing spray crews at the state park during the project. It is anticipated that the herbicide application will be followed by a summer lake draw-down.

“Lake Bistineau is a wonderful resource in this region and giant salvinia has become a major threat to restrict lake use by its rapid growth,” said Rep. Henry Burns (Dist. 9). “I will continue to support Wildlife and Fisheries in their efforts to control this problem.”

Giant salvinia, a free floating aquatic fern native to Brazil, has the potential

to double in biomass every three to five days. When it was first discovered in Lake Bistineau in February of 2006 the Department made significant efforts to eradicate the infestation. Those early efforts were unsuccessful and the plant covered approximately 500 acres of the lake surface by April of 2007. By December of 2007, the plant had expanded to cover approxi-

mately 4,500 acres, despite herbicide applications to 4,156 acres of plant growth which included 3,946 acres treated by LDWF spray crews and 210 acres sprayed by private contractors.

“The lack of severe winter weather since 2001, with temperatures seldom below freezing for extended periods, has allowed the steady growth of all aquatic plants when previous north Louisiana winters would have set them back,” said Joey Shepard, Inland Fisheries biologist program manager.

In an effort to increase LDWF's effectiveness in aquatic plant control, the Governor's Executive Budget for fiscal year 2008-09 would add \$2 million additional dollars to the department's aquatic plant control budget, bringing those resources to \$8.4 million total for next budget year, if approved.

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VOLUNTEERS REMOVE CLOSE TO 600 POUNDS OF TRASH FROM A BATON ROUGE TRAIL AND CREEK

Over 30 volunteers removed 584 pounds of garbage from a hiking trail and Dawson's Creek on Saturday, March 29.

The volunteers covered close to 1/2 of a square mile starting from the Dawson's Creek Bridge on Quail Drive out side of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) Headquarters building. They followed the creek downstream to the end of the walking trail covering all the LDWF land in between.

"We found a television, Christmas lawn decorations, old gas tanks and the disturbing list goes on and on," said LDWF Inland Fisheries Biologist and Volunteer Brac Salyers. "We wanted to do this cleanup to get the trail in better shape for department and public use and to improve the creek's environment."

Volunteers consisted of LDWF employees and spouses, Boy Scouts Troop 478, American Wetland Conservation Corps, Louisiana Hiking Club, Red Stick Fly Fishers and Louisiana State University students.

Dawson's Creek runs from South Acadian Thruway (beside Outback and I-10) to the LDWF Headquarters building and joins in with the drainage from the University Lakes becoming Ward Creek Diversion Canal. The canal then becomes Bayou Manchac, eventually feeding into the Amite River and finally Lake Maurepas.

LDWF would like to thank all of the volunteers that helped with this important task. After the success and proven need of this cleanup, the volunteers said they would like to schedule more cleanups in the near future.

For more information, contact Brac Salyers at 225-765-2461 or bsalyers@wlf.louisiana.gov.

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"Aquatic weeds have become a concern for recreational boaters, fishermen and in some instances municipal and agricultural water supplies," said Rep. Jean Doerge (Dist. 10). "All resources the state dedicates to this problem serve multiple user groups."

Funding sources for the department's aquatic plant program include a boat trailer registration tax set in place by Act 77 of the 2002 Louisiana Legislature's regular session. That funding has been averaging \$500,000 per year since fiscal year 2003-04. Act 183, an equally important piece of legislation passed during the 2007 regular session, extended this funding source with no sunset provision. These funds, combined with federal

and Conservation Fund dollars to purchase additional herbicides and manpower, are all part of the total funding aligned to fight the problem statewide.

"Funding is a key component to keep Wildlife and Fisheries' aquatic plant control program operating at a level that will make a difference in our inland waterways," said Rep. Jim Fannin, (Dist.13). "I will continue to work with fellow legislators and the department to provide the necessary resources."

An additional control method in the program, the salvinia weevil, is seen as a very promising method of control for giant and common salvinia, and obtaining this natural weed predator in

quantities sufficient to contain the threat is now a major component of the program. Inland Fisheries will continue to pursue other treatment options to chemical spraying, including containment booms, mechanical harvesters and increased public education efforts to heighten public awareness.

Controlling the spread of aquatic weeds by a combination of methods will be the focus of the Aquatic Plant Control Program in the years ahead.

For more information, contact LDWF Press Secretary Bo Boehringer at 225-765-5115 or bboehringer@wlf.louisiana.gov.