

DNR Wildlife Resources Asks Public to be on the Lookout for Asian Carp

DNR Wildlife Resources Section officials are asking the public to keep an eye out for invasive Asian carp which are native to eastern China. They were introduced into the United States for use as biological control in aquaculture ponds and wastewater treatment facilities. They escaped into the Mississippi River Basin, and now pose a threat to West Virginia's aquatic ecosystems. They are well-suited to the climate in the Ohio River basin. Biologists expect that Asian carp could disrupt the food chain that supports the native fish of the Ohio River basin.

While not yet established in West Virginia's waters, two species of Asian carp, the silver and bighead carp, pose the greatest threat. These fish grow quickly and can weigh up to 100 pounds. They are also highly prolific, producing up to one million eggs. In states where they have become established, Asian carp make up as much as 90 percent of the total mass of living things in the entire fish community.

They are also voracious feeders. Their diet consists of plankton, aquatic vegetation, aquatic insects and native fish larvae, which puts them in direct competition with native mussels, other filter feeders such as the paddlefish and bigmouth buffalo, and plankton-eating forage fishes like the gizzard shad, threadfin shad and



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Coby Wrasse

Asian carp: bighead (top) and silver

emerald shiner. Nearly all fish feed on zooplankton at some point in their life cycle, thus the potential exists for an adverse effect on all fishes in the Mississippi and Ohio River basins.

Additionally, silver carp pose a direct threat to human health due to their propensity to leap up to 10 feet out of the water when disturbed by the sound and vibration of boat motors, posing a threat to boats, personal watercraft and their passengers.

The West Virginia section of the Ohio River is close to the leading edge of invasion of the bighead and silver carp, and it is important that we work toward slowing their advances, potentially stopping their invasion into West Virginia waters.

The DNR has begun monitoring efforts employing both targeted sampling and eDNA sampling to determine the extent to which these fish have proliferated in West Virginia waters. For more information on Asian carp or to report a suspected sighting, go to the DNR website at: wvdnr.gov/Fishing/Asian_Carp.shtm.

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2013 WV Wildlife Calendar Correction

The 2013 West Virginia Wildlife Calendar has a few errors that hunters need to note. In 2013, the buck gun season will begin on November 25, not on November 18 as listed in the calendar. It will end on December 7. "We apologize for any inconvenience this error has caused anyone," Taylor said.

The Wildlife Calendar goes to the printer in August of the year preceding the year of the calendar. For example, DNR staff sent the 2013 calendar to the printer in August 2012, eight months before the big game seasons for the fall of 2013 are set by the Natural Resources Commission. Therefore, all the big game season dates listed in the Wildlife Calendar are proposed dates which haven't been officially approved.

"That's why the dates say 'due to open' on the calendar," said Taylor. "In addition, we say at the beginning of each month that hunters need to check the current hunting and trapping regulations for accurate season dates.

"The only season basically set in stone is the buck gun season, which opens the Monday before Thanksgiving," Taylor said. "This should satisfy the needs of most hunters who need to request vacation a year in advance.

"Our wildlife management program is a dynamic one, dependent on several variables," noted Taylor. "Our biologists have to wait until January to analyze the check tags to come up with season proposals for that fall. By that time, the calendar has already been out for four months."

Hunters Harvest Record 2,683 Bears

West Virginia hunters harvested 2,683 black bears during the combined 2012 archery and firearms seasons. This total was 12 percent higher than the previous record of 2,392 established in 2010.

"As predicted in the 2012 DNR Mast Survey and Hunting Outlook publication, mast conditions had a tremendous influence on the distribution of this year's bear harvest," said Colin Carpenter, Black Bear Project leader. "The statewide oak mast index for 2012 was much higher than in 2011 but the distribution was spotty. This fact, combined with two additional weeks of archery hunting, allowed archers to locate bears effectively and led to an increased archery harvest."

Abundant oak mast keeps bears active into the winter and makes these bears vulnerable to harvest during concurrent buck-gun and bear seasons and the traditional December firearms season. Favorable mast conditions, combined with multiple counties open during September, led to a large increase in the firearms harvest."

Bowhunters took 746 bears. Firearms hunters harvested 681 bears in September, 266 during the concurrent buck/bear season, and 990 during the traditional December season. A full report is available in the 2012 Big Game Bulletin, available online at www.wvdnr.gov and in limited supply at DNR district offices.

Calendar of Events

APRIL

- 20, 27, May 4 Spring Bird Walks**
Prickett's Fort State Park
Join DNR biologists and volunteers to observe birds and learn ID. Call 304-363-3030 or email prickettsfortsp@wv.gov.

MAY

- 3-5 Bird Banding Weekend**
Tygart Lake State Park
Great for experienced or novice birders. Experience birds up close and personal. Overnight packages available. Call 304-265-6144 or email tygartlakesp@wv.gov.
- 4 42nd Annual Spring Bird Count**
Pipestem Resort State Park
Join the search for 100 species in one day. Call 304-466-1800 x 344.
- 9-12 52nd Annual WV Wildflower Pilgrimage**
Blackwater Falls State Park
Participate in a fun and educational weekend of field trips and presentations about plants and animals.
- 11 Spring Bird Walk**
Watters Smith State Park
Learn basic birding skills. Call 304-745-3081.

MAY continued ...

- 11 Migration Celebration**
Little Beaver State Park
Join Three Rivers Avian Center for various activities and displays related to migratory birds. Free event. Call 304-466-4683.

JUNE

- 8-9 Free Fishing Days**
Statewide
Fish without a license! Great time to try fishing for the first time or to renew an old pastime.
- 8 Bowden Fishing Derby**
Bowden Fish Hatchery
Free fishing for kids; casting contest, catch-and-release pond and catch-and-keep pond. Call 304-637-0245.
- 8 Kids Fishing Derby**
Little Beaver State Park
Kids 14 and under receive lunch, t-shirts and prizes. Begins at 9 a.m. Call 304-763-2494.
- 8 Youth Fishing Derby**
Tygart Lake State Park
Free fishing for kids in cooperation with Hooked on Fishing, Not on Drugs program. Call 304-265-6144.