LDWF Office of Fisheries

Louisiana's Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Report, Sumer 2022

(January 2022 – May 31, 2022)

New Reported ANS:

Murray Cod:

In March 2022, LDWF received a call and picture of fish from the public. The caller stated that the fish was caught by a friend and then released back into the pond. LDWF and other experts identified the fish in the picture as a Murray Cod. A Google image search revealed that this picture was not in any of the Google indexed images. After speaking with the angler to collect additional information, LDWF biologists went to the location, surveyed the small pond and canals in the area, and did not find any Murray Cod or other non-native fish. The color of the dirt in the picture did not match the locations, so LDWF called the angler to get more information. During that phone call, the angler directed us to a nearby pond, which was not electrofished during the first outing due to equipment issues. During this phone call, the angler said that was not his fish in the picture but one that "Google suggested". LDWF returned to the new pond to sample and did not find any non-native fish. LDWF is aware of a few Murray Cod in LA based on aquarium forum posts so we cannot confirm that this is a false report or a misidentified fish. LDWF plans to sample this area in Fall 2022. As of now, we consider this as an unconfirmed report.

Update to recently reported ANS:

Red Piranha:

On May 26, 2021, the LDWF ANS coordinator received a report from the public of a Pacu caught in University Lake in Baton Rouge. Upon receiving the fish, it was determined to be a Red Piranha. LDWF has sampled the lakes monthly and has not recovered any more piranha. LDWF has continued to sample in the area since it is located near a long-term sampling location. Since May 2021 LDWF has sampled the area 5 times and has not found any piranha. LDWF considers this to be a single introduction and will not report on the piranha after this report.

Tilapia:

Blue Tilapia were found during routine sampling in October 2019 by LDWF in University Lake located in Baton Rouge. Repeated sampling in 2020 has shown a reproducing population. The February 2021 freeze kept the Baton Rouge area under 40 degrees for 137 hours and below freezing for 94 hours.

No live tilapia have been found or reported since the fall of 2020. Since that time, LDWF has sampled the area at least 5 times and has not found any live tilapia. LDWF does not believe the population has survived the cold spell in Feb 2019.
This will be the last report of this population unless individuals are found again.

Status of established ANS

Apple Snail:

Public reports of Apple Snails slowed from the normal pace in previous years. With the drought conditions experienced, the snails are mainly in canals and bayous and not in drainage ditches. This has reduced the visibility to the public. The LA crawfish industry is reporting large catches in their fields and this has generated more public interest.

Limpkin populations have been increasing in LA. These birds eat Apple Snails and many piles of empty shells have been reported in areas with Limpkins. LDWF is hopeful that these birds may help reduce the Apple Snail numbers in some areas.

Invasive Carp:

In the fiscal year 2020, LDWF started 2 projects funded through USFWS's Lower Mississippi River Invasive Carp Partnership and the Atchafalaya, Red, and White Rivers Invasive Carp Partnership. These two projects should assist LDWF in locating breeding areas and identifying potential locations for carp barriers. LDWF has also tagged approx. 107 invasive carp to help understand the movement of the carp in South Louisiana. Of the 107 invasive carp tagged, 57 have been detected. Those fish movements will assist in determining their seasonal migration patterns. A Grass Carp tagged in Iowa was detected in the lower Atchafalaya River through this project. LDWF also collected over 10,000 carp larvae in one 10-minute plankton tow on the Atchafalaya River. During plankton tows, LDWF biologists captured Silver Carp ranging from 1 to 2-inches in June. Both of these projects will conclude in Dec 2022.

In the fiscal year 2021, LDWF started 4 partnership-funded projects to investigate the developing markets for invasive carp, investigate obstacles inhibiting commercial fishermen from harvesting invasive carp, and to study the impacts of invasive carp on native commercially important fish. These

projects will hopefully help increase market demand as well as help understand the impacts on native fish. The projects are still in progress and there are no results to report yet from them.

For the fiscal year 2022, LDWF has proposed additional studies to expand the telemetry project, develop commercial markets for carp, help define the exact breeding periods of the carp, continue studying impacts on native fisheries, and investigate the effectiveness of commercial gill nets in off-channel habitats. These projects will start in January 2023.

Asian swamp eels:
Monopterus cuchia was found in Bayou St John, New Orleans in June 2019. LDWF and a local college professor continue to monitor and sample the population. Two small eels were found in samples collected in Sept 2020. No eels were found by LDWF or the college researchers from September 2020 to May 2022. In 2021, the few swamp eels that were found were attributed to the vegetation control of both LDWF and local community organizations. The vegetation control is ongoing and appears to be just as successful as last year. Only one specimen has been reported thus far in 2022 and was caught by an angler and confirmed via photograph. This specimen was caught at the original site where the swamp eels were first detected. LDWF plans to sample in the late summer of 2022.

Aquatic Plant Control Program:
The program is housed within the LDWF's Inland Fisheries Section. LDWF continued with our control of invasive vegetation species using a variety of techniques. Aquatic plant control plans were developed for 74 different water bodies during the reporting period. Giant Salvinia continues to be the most problematic invasive plant in Louisiana. Since 2010, LDWF has treated an average of 21,404.33 acres of Giant Salvinia per year with herbicides. LDWF uses an integrated approach to control aquatic plants, consisting of chemical, physical (booms and drawdowns), and biological (insects and Grass Carp) methods to achieve a greater combined benefit. LDWF has an annual Aquatic Plant Control Program budget of $3,200,000 of which more than 50% of that is spent on Giant Salvinia alone for monitoring, treatment, and research.

LA Invasive Species Project on iNaturalist:
A project was initiated where observations from members of the public are filtered on iNatualist to produce a list of all invasive species reported. This list of species and locations is screened by the LDWF ANS coordinator to look for new invasive species as well as any range extensions. Any observations of interest may generate a site visit to determine if the report is accurate. Thus far, no data has yielded any confirmed new invasive species.