

Summer bowfishing for grass carp



RENE HATTEN
STORIES FROM
THE OUTDOORS

The use of grass carp to control aquatic vegetation in public waters has turned into a "big black eye" for the outdoors.

They were introduced by individuals and yes, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (oops). They are redistributed by storms, backwaters and fishermen moving to other waters. In north Louisiana, grass carp were introduced into a portion of Bayou Desiard and in 1994 in Caney Lake. Headlines were reading, "think of grass-eating piranha and that's what you've got" and "Grass Carp Out of Control."

Basically, Caney Lake is a Trophy bass lake (reservoir) that was stocked after impoundment, with introduced Florida bass. Then someone introduced hydrilla in 1988. In 1992, there were 500 acres of hydrilla. The entire lake was under 5000 acres. The 12,000 introduced grass carp have stripped the lake except for lily pads.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has been attempting to reduce the number by a variety of methods, including electro-fishing and a bow-hunting season. Bowfishing is a sport that has developed out of a need to eliminate this invasive species.

Jared Saterfiel, Jordan McMillon and Brandon Lively, bowfish on the Ouachita River. Jared took a 45-lb grass carp in the clear shallows, watching for the baitfish movement.

Using the new LED lights and his recurve bow with a bottle reel equipped with nylon string. (He has a safety line for break away to keep it from coming back to the shooter).

They stand atop his Jon Boat, using a troller

motor, to cruise the grass structure usually at night, but you can go during the day.

They troll back and forth taking turns shooting, making sure to allow for the water refraction and shoot below about two to three inches. They advise to have plenty of mosquito dope because they are there too. One time on this trip, they had to get in the water with pliers, to free their fiberglass arrow from a cypress tree.

Bowfishing is fun for all the ages, whether watching or participating. Jared usually takes anyone that is interested, and has video several trips. The main use for this oily fish here in our area, is for cut bait, used on trotlines. I have not heard of anyone able to make grass carp palatable for eating.

In a recent press release, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Chef Philippe Parola, in an effort to produce a demand for two species of Asian carp, the silver and bighead carp, announced they are launching the "Silverfin Promotion."

Both species of carp are exotic to U.S. waters and are causing major problems where they become established.

They have been very prolific in the Mississippi River and all tributaries and distributaries of the river (including the Ouachita River).

Both species are filter feeders and directly compete with paddlefish (spoonbill catfish), shad and the very young of all species of recreational and commercial fish. In many northern water-bodies, these species have already replaced native populations of fish.

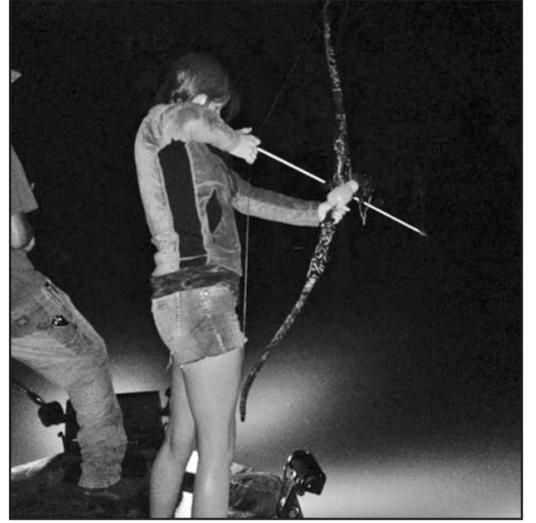
In addition to being an ecological threat, the silver carp is a direct threat to boaters and others that use our water-bodies. These fish, which can weigh 60 pounds, have a habit of jumping out of the water when disturbed by boats.

Boaters and skiers have been severely injured by these fish. The fish have also damaged equipment on boats such as windshields, radios, GPS units and depth finders.

These fish are firmly es-



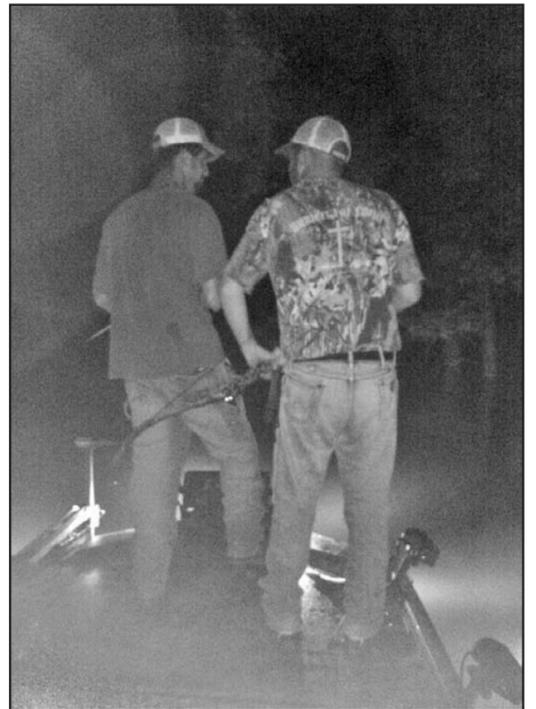
Citizen photos by Rene Hatten
JARED SATERFIEL bowfishing on the Ouachita River.



JORDAN MCMILLON taking a shot at grass carp in the Ouachita River.



JARED SATERFIEL caught this 45 lb. grass carp by bowfishing on the Ouachita River.



BRANDON LIVELY and Jared Saterfiel cruising the grassy shallows for grass carp.

tablished throughout the Mississippi River Basin and in Louisiana are abundant in the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers.

Eradication is not possible, but if a sufficient demand for the fish can be generated, we may be able to control their numbers. Although we have large numbers of silver and bighead carp in Louisiana waters, our river systems are very productive.

Department biologists feel there has been a reduction in shad and paddlefish; however we do not feel that other recreational and commercial species have been impacted in most water bodies.

If we are successful in establishing a demand for these fish, we may be able to reduce their numbers before they severely impact Louisiana's multi-million dollar commercial and recreational fishing

industry.

I encourage you to pursue bowfishing if you have ever had the desire. It is a

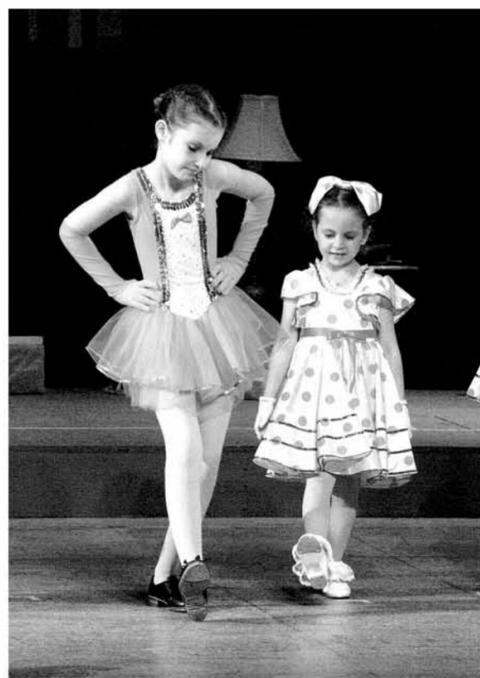
great way to stay brushed up on your bow season skills.

We are stewards of our

environment and we can get out there and make a difference to get things back under control.

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