

Giant Salvinia causing problems for Caddo Lake

Posted: Feb 5, 2009 05:58 PM

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CADDO LAKE, TX (KLTV) - Visitors to Caddo Lake call it "mysterious and beautiful." But an invasive plant is now terrorizing the wildlife there.

For years, Giant Salvinia has been growing out of control on Caddo Lake. Residents have done everything they can, but efforts to get Giant Salvinia under control are becoming almost impossible. It's aggressive and dangerous.

"It's right out of a science fiction movie of the type you would have seen in a drive-in theater about 'The Blob', laughs Jack Canson, a Caddo lake protector. "Giant Salvinia. It's a monster!"

Jack Canson has trolled through the waters of Caddo Lake for years. Folks call him the "lake protector", and his goal is to rid Caddo of Giant Salvinia weeds.

"You can see how it's feeling in here. It's a floating fern. It reproduces by vegetated fragmentation. It clones itself," he explained. "When the water temperature gets around 80 this stuff starts doubling every two days. An acre can be two acres in two days. It's pretty frightening."

It was just a year ago that volunteers built a 2 mile-long fence to stop Salvinia from spreading. But Hurricane Ike destroyed it and the cost to rebuild it is too high. So the wall came down and more Giant Salvinia moved in.

"I will say this will be three quarters filled with Giant Salvinia by June of this year. There's little doubt of that. When they begin to matt that shut out all the sun light at the same time they take all of the dissolved oxygen out of the water and nothing can live underneath these plants."

Not only is Giant Salvinia hurting the fish, but residents fear it will put a damper on tourism.

"People that make their living off the lake, these are folks who are scrambling to make a living and they need every tourist dollar they can get down here."

In hopes of saving Caddo Lake, Texas Parks and Wildlife have used herbicide spray, and insects to try and rid Giant Salvinia, but their fear is the way that it spreads.

"A lot of times when we see a new infestation it's at a boat ramp and it's probably because somebody didn't realize that they had the plants on their trailer," said Tim Bister, the District Fishery Biologist for Texas Parks & Wildlife. "It's very important for boaters to inspect their trailers."

Texas Parks and Wildlife says to not only check your trailer for Giant Salvinia, check your boat too. They also ask that you contact them if you suspect Giant Salvinia is growing on a lake or pond near you.