

# THE MARSHALL NEWS MESSENGER

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## WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU GIANT SALVINIA

### Girls use vacation to set up lemonade stand to fight growing danger to Caddo Lake



Photo by /  
From left, cousins Allison Turner, Madeleine Turner and Caroline Billeaud set up a lemonade stand to raise money to benefit invasive aquatic plant spraying efforts on Caddo Lake. The girls, who are the granddaughters of Dr. Carl and Diane Turner, decided to help after seeing the invasion of giant salvinia on the lake while taking a boat ride during a visit with their grandparents.

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When Dr. Carl and Diane Turner took their grandchildren out for a boat ride on Caddo Lake during a recent trip at the family's weekend house, they were disturbed by what they saw — blankets of small, floating aquatic ferns, better known as giant salvinia, plaguing the lake.

"The giant salvinia problem is horrible," said Mrs. Turner.

"We live on the river, which is not too bad, but when we went out boat riding, they said, 'What's all this green stuff?' They were horrified. They said, 'It's covering up the whole lake.'"

After explaining to the girls —

9-year-old Allison Turner, 10-year-old Madeleine Turner and 4-year-old Caroline Billeaud — that it was giant salvinia and a great concern for many, the children came up with a plan of their own to help fight the invasion.

"The next morning they said, 'We're going to have a lemonade stand,'" recalled Mrs. Turner.

### Getting to work

The girls, two of which were visiting from out of town for their annual Girls Week with the grandparents, followed through on the plan, setting up a lemonade stand at their grandparents' home in Marshall, and selling it

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Larry D. Hodge / Texas Parks and Wildlife Photo

Giant salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*) is a floating, rootless fern from Brazil that can take over an entire lake, making it unsuitable for fish and wildlife and unusable by humans.

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for 50 cents a cup to benefit Caddo Lake.

All patrons were given a note, created by the older two girls, detailing the epidemic at Caddo Lake, the history behind the giant salvinia problem and their desire to help raise money for the lake to assist officials with the spray they need to kill the plants.

"If we do not do something, Caddo Lake will be covered," they wrote. "We need your help to raise money for Caddo Lake so we can give the wildlife rangers spray that is biodegradable chemicals to kill the plants.

"It has almost covered the fishing area, but will possibly cover the whole lake," they wrote.

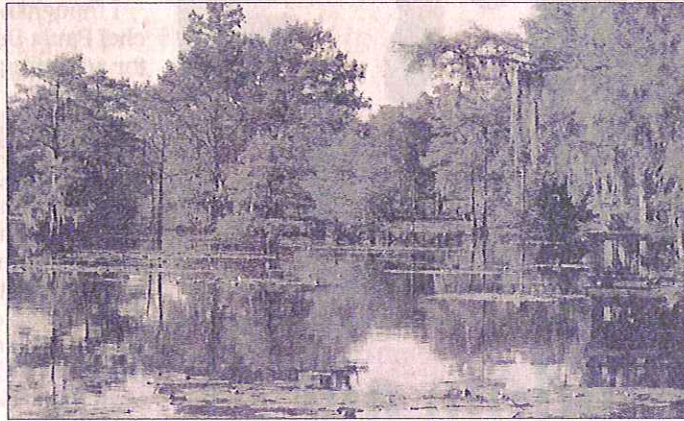
The cousins' outcries were heard as they raised \$40 through their lemonade stand.

"They raised \$40, which is a lot of money," said Mrs. Turner. "They handed out that paper with that glass of lemonade. I was real proud of them."

### A growing problem

Lynn Wright, local assistant district fisheries biologist for Texas Parks and Wildlife, said the salvinia is thick this year at Caddo Lake, having grown nearly three times bigger than last year.

"Last year, when we surveyed (the amount of salvinia), we estimated almost 1,400 acres of salvinia on the Texas side. Based on observations this year, it's three times as much," Wright



Larry D. Hodge / Texas Parks and Wildlife Photo

Caddo Lake, the only natural lake in Texas and designated a wetland of international importance by the RAMSAR convention, is threatened by invasive aquatics like giant salvinia and water hyacinth.

said.

"The reason we're probably having the worst year in salvinia is because we had a pretty mild winter," he said. "Now, it's warmed up and the stuff is exploding."

Wright said spraying efforts usually begin later in the summer. The department will probably start surveying the lakes in August in efforts to map out the amount of vegetation.

"There's salvinia out there and a lot of it," he reiterated. "We're doing the best we can with the tools we have (to fight it)."

He said they can only do so much as it takes lots of resources to treat it.

"Spring herbicide is a very expensive tool to treat salvinia," said Wright. "Even with our budget, we're pretty limited."

Mrs. Turner said her grandchildren will most likely donate the funds they raised through their lemonade sales to the Friends of the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge, who are big supporters of Caddo Lake and focuses on educating children about nature.

"I'm proud they care about the lake and took that action," she said of her grandchildren, noting some people just gave to them without buying lemonade because they knew it was for the lake, and wanted to help.

The grandmother said she's happy they're also learning to love the lake because so many youth are not excited about nature anymore.

"We've been so concerned about children not into nature, and being about video games," she said.

"We play outside when they're with us," she said, chuckling.

"I'm so proud they care about their environment," the grandmother said.

### Preventing spreading

Wright said the salvinia is a thick aquatic fern that originated in South America.

"They tend to stick to boats and trailers," he said.

And because it costs so much to treat and try to remove, he urges boaters to clean and drain their boats before traveling to another lake in order to prevent the transporting of salvinia to other areas.

"We had some issues this winter about salvinia spreading to other lakes," said Wright, noting it is against the law to transport aquatic plants.

"If people don't clean their boats off when they go to another lake, they can easily put it in another lake," he said. "Clean your boats and drain them off before you go to another lake."

"Make sure it's not hanging off of the boat; make sure there's no vegetation on it and make sure we're not spreading it to a new lake," said Wright.

He said the plant first started spreading in Texas in the late 1990s after its discovery in a lake near Houston.

"It initially spread from there," the biologist said. "It's (now) in Caddo, Toledo Bend... These big lakes now have it and its spreading from there. We don't want people to spread it around."