

New invasive plant found in Caddo Lake

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KARNACK — Amid the fight against giant salvinia, alligator weed, water hyacinth and hydrilla, another invasive plant species has crept into Caddo Lake.

At a Caddo Lake community meeting sponsored by the Caddo Lake Clearinghouse this past week in Karnack, biologists and representatives from Texas Parks and Wildlife and several Caddo Lake organizations updated residents on several issues concerning the lake and surrounding areas.

One issue was that of the crested floating heart, a plant that arrived in the United States from Asia in 2008 after escaping from the ornamental plant trade.

The plant, which has a heart-shaped lily pad leaf and white flower with five petals, was first spotted in Caddo Lake in October 2014 by Lee Eisenberg, the Greater Caddo Lake Association's resident scientist.

It has been spotted primarily in Florida and South Carolina, where it forms a living blanket across waterways and chokes access to the sun for native plants underneath the water.

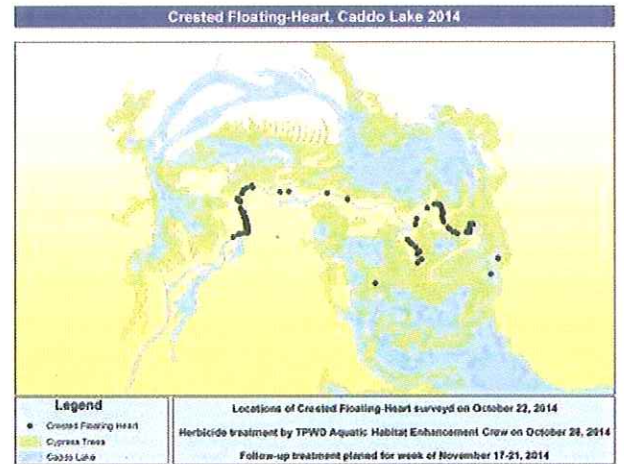
“As soon as we heard about it, thanks to Lee Eisenberg, within a day or two we went out and surveyed all the places we could find it and within a week... we sprayed about five acres worth,” said TPWD District Fisheries Biologist Timothy Bister.

While the floating heart has yet to do any visible damage, Bister said, “It’s pretty fair to say we’re not going to give it the opportunity to see how bad it can get.”

“We’re going to keep on top of this stuff for sure,” said Lynn D. Wright, assistant district fisheries biologist for TPWD.

The plant was added to the Caddo Lake Invasives Watch List because of its rapidly expanding range and how easily it propagates. Crested floating hearts chopped up by the blades on a boat’s motor can form new plants from the cut-up bits.

Bister encourages people out on the lake to pull and dispose of any of the plants they find, then call



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Biologists with Texas Parks and Wildlife surveyed Caddo Lake in October and mapped out all the locations that a new invasive plant species, the crested floating heart, was found.

him so biologists can map out the location.

“If you see it, pick it up and dispose of it, throw it away, and give me a call and let me know where it was,” Bister said.

The plant’s lily pad can reach about four to five inches in diameter.

Report locations of suspected crested floating hearts to TPWD at (903) 938-1007.

Several other items were discussed at the meeting..

Crude oil from a Sunoco Logistics Mid Valley pipeline spilled Oct. 13 into the Tete Bayou, just upstream of Caddo Lake near Moringsport, Louisiana. Initial reports indicate 4,000 barrels of oil were released; some wildlife was killed, mostly turtles, crawfish and frogs; and four miles of the bayou was affected.

Volunteers were thanked for their successful efforts to establish the first weevil rearing facility at Caddo Lake and the initial release of weevils from the Morley Hudson Weevil Greenhouse.

An update was given on the paddlefish reintroduction experiment and educational efforts with schools. The first batch of paddlefish, released in May, carried transmitters and area school children were able to name and track them. The second batch of 2,000 paddlefish were released in September with the hopes of re-populating the lake.

Rick Lowerre, president of the Caddo Lake Institute, asked for community members to submit their ideas for how the institute and other Caddo Lake organizations and surrounding communities can celebrate World Wetlands Day on Feb. 2. He also encouraged participation in the Wetlands Youth Photo Contest between Feb. 2 and March 2. The winner of the contest, open to ages 15-24, will get a free flight to a famous wetlands of their choice.