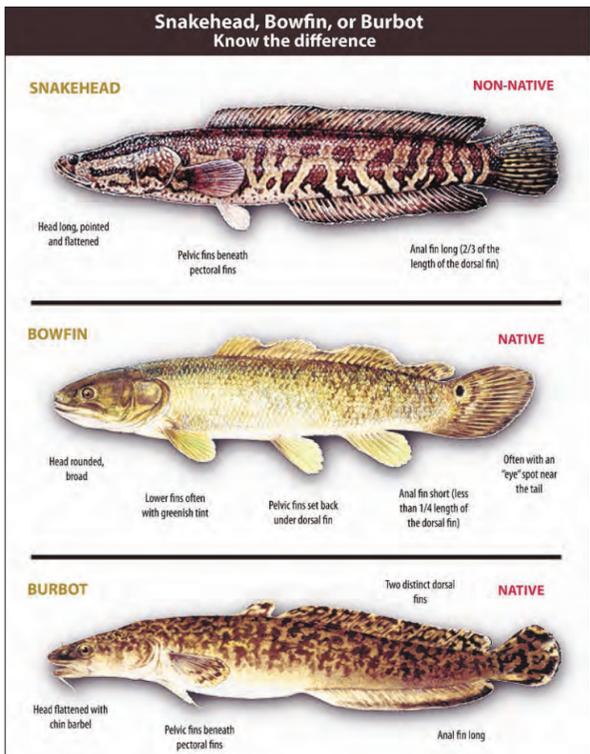




Reconnect with your environment

Learn about environmental issues, their effect on your community and actions for your involvement.



WIKIMEDIA

Many invasive aquatic plants and animals continue to be sold through aquarium and pond supply dealers, both online and in retail garden centers. Never release unwanted fish from your tank or water gardens outdoors. Donate them, return them to the store if possible or destroy them humanely and put them in the household trash or use as fertilizer.

Lake Erie burbot aren't on Pa.'s endangered list

By ANNA MCCARTNEY
Contributing writer

Important correction: Burbot are NOT considered an endangered species in Lake Erie, where they are considered abundant according to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission website <http://fishandboat.com/fishpub/summary/lakeerie.html>.

So to all you Lake Erie burbot anglers, enjoy your catch and please accept my sincere apology for the error on the Nov. 20 NIE page on snakehead.

However "elsewhere in the state their (burbot) populations are considered poorly established and the burbot is considered an endangered species, not to be caught or possessed."

Readers contacted the newsroom and me when they read the article on the difference between snakehead, bowfin and burbot. They rightfully questioned the accuracy of the information.

Unfortunately, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat website page about snakehead and look-alike species where I had gotten my information (<http://fishandboat.com/water/fish/snakehead/snakehead.htm>) said: "The only Pennsylvania populations of burbot occur in Lake Erie and the Allegheny River headwaters. Even though burbot are found in several streams in the Allegheny River

watershed, they are rarely abundant at any given location.

"Burbot are listed as an 'endangered species,' which means that if caught, they must be immediately returned to the water unharmed. The catching, taking, killing, possessing, importing to or exporting from Pennsylvania, selling, offering for sale or purchasing of any individual of these species, alive or dead, or any part thereof is prohibited."

The page did not specify the Lake Erie exclusion. I thank all the readers for setting me straight on the rules.

To clarify, the rules for Lake Erie and Tributary Streams as they appear in the 2012 Pennsylvania Fishing Laws and Regulations Summary Book (<http://fishandboat.com/fishpub/summary/lakeerie.html>) are:

"Burbot (when taken by scuba divers by use of nonmechanical spears or gigs at a depth of at least 60 feet) is open June 1 through Sept. 30 with no minimum size and a daily catch limit of 5. Burbot (when taken by hook and line) is open year-round with no minimum size and a daily catch limit of five."

ANNA MCCARTNEY, a communications and education specialist for Pennsylvania Sea Grant, can be reached by e-mail at axm40@psu.edu.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Non-native plants and fish aren't the only threats to our environment. This rusty crayfish, above, and other animals are often used by schools for observation and experimentation and lots of people buy them as pets. They can become invasive and displace native animals and alter the food web. Other species that should never be released into the outdoors or moved from one outdoor habitat to another are snails, salamanders, frogs, turtles, crabs, crayfish, worms, aquatic insects and microscopic animals like fairy shrimp and "sea monkeys."

Shed bad habits

Aquarium owners, water gardeners can halt spread of invasive species

By ANNA MCCARTNEY
Contributing writer

So you have decided that a home aquarium or a tranquil water garden is a great gift idea or you want one yourself to help you release stress.

Before purchasing any aquatic animals or plants, you should know more about the strain they may cause when they get into an environment where they don't belong.

Millions of people own home aquariums, and water gardening is one of the fastest-growing segments in the garden industry. Yet many aquarium hobbyists, backyard pond owners and water gardeners don't know what to do with animals they no longer want or how to prevent floods from releasing their plants and animals to other areas.

While most invasive species enter U.S. waterways as hitchhikers, unintentional release by aquarium and water-garden hobbyists is also responsible for spreading non-native plants and animals.

Many are unaware that the spread of non-native plants and animals creates negative environmental, economic and human health impacts, including harm to native species and diminished recreational opportunities. In addition, billions of dollars must be spent to counter the spread of non-native species.

Every year thousands of these plants and animals are released into the environment. Those that survive can degrade water quality and carry diseases that can kill native fish. Invasive plants can destroy habitats, clog waterways and impede recreation by snagging boat propellers.

To inform aquarium owners and water gardeners of the role they can play in preventing irreparable harm caused by these species, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Sea Grant College Program created a national education program

called Habitattitude, a trademarked name.

Campaign goals are designed to help hobbyists to ensure their pets are thoughtfully chosen and well cared for, to find safe alternatives to releasing their pets and to protect the natural environment from the impacts of unwanted pets and plants.

It encourages you to take the following responsible actions:

- Know which aquatic species are prohibited and restricted in your state
 - Ask suppliers/retailers about the origins and whether plants or animals have been known to be invasive species and for proper handling advice, possible returns or humane way to get rid of unwanted animals
 - Consider the adult size, aggression levels and breeding habits of fish and other aquatic animals to ensure you can accommodate and afford them for their entire life span
 - Join a local fish club to obtain locally bred aquatic pets
 - Don't flush live or dead fish down the toilet or storm drains — this can be a pathway for invasions and can introduce disease to native fish
 - Seal aquatic plants in plastic bags and dispose in trash to be landfilled
 - Keep water gardens out of areas that may flood
 - Educate fellow hobbyists by sharing information and educational materials through online communities, pet blogs and clubs
 - Encourage your local fish clubs and stores to get involved by providing speakers and educational materials
 - Work with local authorities and conservation groups
- For more information, contact Pennsylvania Sea Grant Coastal Outreach Specialist Sara N. Grisé at sng121@psu.edu or 217-9020 or visit www.habitattitude.net/.

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New introductions of invasive plants and animals can result with the improper disposal of ornamental pond plants or water, or when ponds adjacent to local water bodies overflow with excess rains. These exotic intruders choke out native plants and animals, inhibiting recreation areas and lowering lakefront property values.



WIKIMEDIA

Water hyacinths and other aquatic plants are known for growing rapidly to form large dense floating mats on ponds, drains, lakes and still waters in swamps. The floating mats can double in size within days and pose flooding risks and drowning risks to humans and livestock.



KARLA KACZMAREK/Contributed photo

When carp and goldfish become established in local waterbodies, they compete with native fish for food and space. Never turn them loose when they get too big for your tank or they seem to be overtaking your backyard water garden.

This page brought to you by:



Check out these websites to learn more:

www.habitattitude.net
<http://nas.er.usgs.gov/>
www.bigfishcampaign.org/
www.paseagrant.org

Find other articles about avoidable problems. Did people cause the problems? What are possible solutions or is the best solution prevention?

Create a poster that advises aquarium owners and water gardeners to never dump their aquatic plants or pets and take other precautions to keep them out of the environment. Send your poster ideas to axm40@psu.edu for possible publication in the weekly "your space" feature.

