

Exotic Aquatics

Freshwater:

Armored Catfish: Armored catfish also known as Plecos, Plecostomous, suckermouth catfish, algae eaters, etc. are native to South America. Their introduction to Texas waters was likely from releases from personal aquariums. They damage habitat by eating native vegetation, burrowing into the river banks causing destabilization. They outcompete native herbivorous fishes, remove large amounts of primary production sources in waterways, and they destroy native habitat used by other species of fish and invertebrates. Because of their bony armored exterior they have few natural predators.

Sources:

- <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/texas/newsroom/texas-by-nature-armored-catfish.xml>
- <http://www.chron.com/sports/outdoors/article/Armored-catfish-decimating-Texas-waterways-2175976.php>

Grass Carp: The grass carp is one of four Asian carp species that have invaded waters in the U.S. They are voracious herbivores and were likely introduced when they were used for vegetation control because they can consume 40-300% of their body weight in vegetation in a day. They are still used for vegetation control in U.S. waters, but triploid (sterile) fish must be used. *You can show a video of these carp jumping out of the water and hurting boaters.

Sources:

- http://www.texasinvasives.org/animal_database/detail.php?symbol=13
- http://tpwd.texas.gov/landwater/water/habitats/private_water/gcarp.phtml

Tilapia: Tilapia are a popular aquaculture and aquaponics species because of their broad diet, quick growth, and hearty in nature. These same characters make them a very invasive fish in natural waterways.

Sources:

- <http://greenphoenixfarms.com/the-current-tilapia-situation-in-texas/>
- <http://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/Texas-Tilapia-Farmer-Ordered-to-Destroy-50000-Fish-292709391.html>

Pacu and Piranha: The Pacu is a relative to the Piranha, but is not dangerous. It is not known if there are any reproducing populations in Texas. Their introductions are likely from irresponsible aquarium owners releasing fish into local waterways.

Sources:

- <http://www.kltv.com/story/17168066/piranha-sub-species-caught-in-east-texas-lake>
- <http://www.chron.com/sports/outdoors/article/Piranhas-other-dangerous-exotic-species-found-in-2187403.php>

Snakehead: No snakeheads have been found in Texas to date, but they are a species of concern for TPWD.

Sources:

- <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/texas/explore/texas-by-nature-snakehead.xml>
- <http://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/species/exotic/snakehead.phtml>

Saltwater:

Lionfish: Lionfish were first officially reported in TX waters in 2011. They are voracious predators and are extremely adaptable to new prey sources, a wide range of salinities and habitats. They are superior competitors to other predators in saltwater rocky shore and reef habitats. They have high fecundity, and protective spines making this a quickly reproducing species with few natural predators.

Sources:

- http://www.tpwmagazine.com/archive/2013/dec/ed_3_lionfish/
- http://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/species/exotic/faq_lionfish.phtml

Giant Tiger Prawn: This Asian Tiger Prawn from the Western Pacific can grow to thirteen inches long and readily out competes the native Texas shrimp species. They were first officially reported in Texas in 2011.

Sources:

- <http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Asian-tiger-prawns-invade-the-Gulf-of-Mexico-2424242.php>
- <http://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/factsheet.aspx?SpeciesID=1209>

Other General Sources:

- http://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/species/exotic/prohibited_aquatic.phtml