

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COMMON CARP AT GREAT MEADOWS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE – CONCORD IMPOUNDMENTS

What kind of fish are they?

The large fish that you see jumping out of the water, trying to swim through the hose or through the water control structures are Common Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*). Carp are not native to the United States and are one of the top 100 most invasive species in North America. (See other sign for more information about Common Carp).

Do they come from the river?/ Did they swim through the hose into the impoundments?

The carp got into the impoundments from the Concord River during times of high water.

Why are they swimming toward the pipe, are they trying to get back into the river?

The carp are instinctively swimming against the current. As we pump water into the upper pool, water is flowing fast enough to trigger the carp to swim upstream by the pump hose. The water is also flowing fast enough through the water control structure along the cross dike from the upper pool to the lower pool to cause carp to swim against the flow there as well.

Can you do something to help them get into the other pool?

You can often see the fish gathering on the lower pool side as they try to make their way to the upper pool. As carp swim upstream they will often jump. It is an impressive aerial display, but at the cross dike they may jump high enough to hit the metal grates over the water control structures. The fish eventually figure out how to pass over the boards inside the structure and move into the upper pool. In the upper pool where the pump hose empties, the fish are gathering as they try to swim upstream through the hose. It is not possible for the carp to swim through the hose, but they continue to try. Unfortunately, once the pump is turned off and the oxygen levels in the water decrease the fish soon die if they do not find their way back into the channels.

Why don't we feed them to the hungry or use them as fertilizer?

Staff at the Eastern Massachusetts Complex acknowledge and are familiar with the many uses Common Carp can alternatively be used for. However, their flavor varies with the quality of the water from which fish are captured. The MA Department of Public Health (MDPH) has issued a fish consumption advisory for the Concord River due to mercury contamination which is a serious health hazard. For more information contact MDPH at 617-624-5757 or www.mass.gov/dph.

Why don't you do something to help them?

As mentioned in a previous question, Common Carp are the top 100 most invasive species in North America and US Fish and Wildlife Service's priority is managing for native species, which at the Concord Impoundments most especially means providing a feeding and resting stop for migratory waterfowl and habitat for the state-listed threatened species the Blanding's Turtles. Due to the impacts the Common Carp has on its habitat (see other sign) it creates competition and negative effects to our goal for the refuge.

Your concern and cooperation are much appreciated. For further information, please call the refuge at 978-443-4661 x24 for Stephanie Koch or x37 for Eileen McGourty