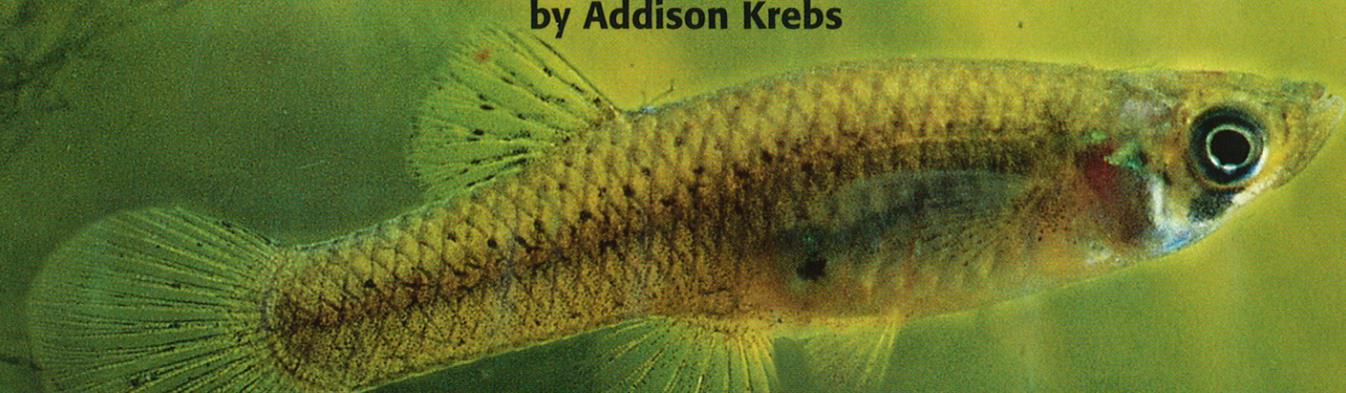


## Nebraska's Invasive

# Aquatic Species

by Addison Krebs



**Gambusia, or mosquitofish do not prefer a diet of mosquito larvae. These aggressive non-native fish species are implicated in the decline of the plains topminnow and amphibian populations.**

**Gambusia photo by Ken Bouc  
Carp illustrations by Joe Tomelleri**



**EURASIAN WATER MILFOIL**



**JAPANESE MYSTERY SNAIL**

**E**xtra! Extra! Invasive species are starting to crawl out of the Platte River! (Or is it your aquarium?)

Normally, when you look at the clams, snails and fish in your fish tank, you don't think about them making headlines. What if those very things became large jumping fish, millions of small clams on the bottom of a lake, or huge underwater forests of water plants? That very thing can happen when aquariums are dumped into Nebraska ecosystems. Aquatic invasive species can be prevented with a little help from you. But how?

Aquatic invasive species are animals or plants that can harm lakes, rivers, and wetlands. The plants and animals that thrive in

your aquarium can become an invasive species and cause havoc if released into the environment.

### Eurasian Water Milfoil

This invasive plant was first introduced into the United States by people dumping their aquarium into local bodies of water. This plant is very aggressive and crowds out native water plants. It is now being spread by pieces of the plant attaching to a boat or trailer, and then released into a new body of water when the infested boat or trailer enters the water.

### Japanese Mystery Snail

It goes by many other names, such as Chinese mystery snail, Oriental

mystery snail and Asian apple snail, but no matter what the name, it still is an invasive species in Nebraska. This is one of the most common aquarium snails. ... I even have one in my fish tank. This, too, was introduced into Nebraska waterways by people dumping their aquarium into native waters. This snail competes with native snails for food and clog water pipes.

### Carp

There are many types of carp; some are native and some are not. Nebraska has four invasive carp species: bighead, silver, grass and common.

**BIGHEAD CARP**



**Bighead and Silver Carp –** The simple noise of a boat can make thousands of these carp jump out of the water! These two species are found in the Missouri, Platte and Elkhorn rivers.

**GRASS CARP**



**Grass Carp –** Grass carp are wildly used to control weeds in ponds. They have escaped from their ponds and now eat the plants, snails, clams and baitfish that other native fish need to survive. Today, they are found in the Missouri River.

**COMMON CARP**



**Common Carp –** Found throughout Nebraska, common carp are often introduced into a lake for fishing recreation. They eat plankton and other small animals that native fish normally eat.

### Zebra and Quagga Mussels

Many of you may have heard about the draining of Zorinsky Lake in Omaha because of the zebra mussel infestation. Why are these animals so bad that they had to drain the lake? They clog pipes and litter beaches with sharp shells. And, they eat plankton that baby fish usually eat. With nothing to eat, baby fish cannot survive and the whole food web collapses. Zebra mussels can be the size of a pinhead to the size of a Brazil nut.



**ANY BENSON,  
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, BUGWOOD.ORG**

**ZEBRA MUSSEL**

Quagga mussels generally are a little bigger than zebra mussels. Both were introduced into the United States by ships from Europe that had them in their ballast water. Now they are mainly spread by boaters not cleaning their boats.

I was the Boy Scout who found the first zebra mussel in Zorinsky Lake. I knew exactly what to do. ... I reported it. Be like me, if you stumble upon an invasive species or if you see anything unusual, report it to the Nebraska Invasive Species Project or the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

You can help stop the spread of these species by never dumping your aquarium or a bait bucket in a body of water. When boating, remember the slogan, Clean, Drain and Dry. Doing those three things will help stop the spread of unwanted species to our Nebraska waterways. Let's keep our Nebraska waters free of invasive species!