

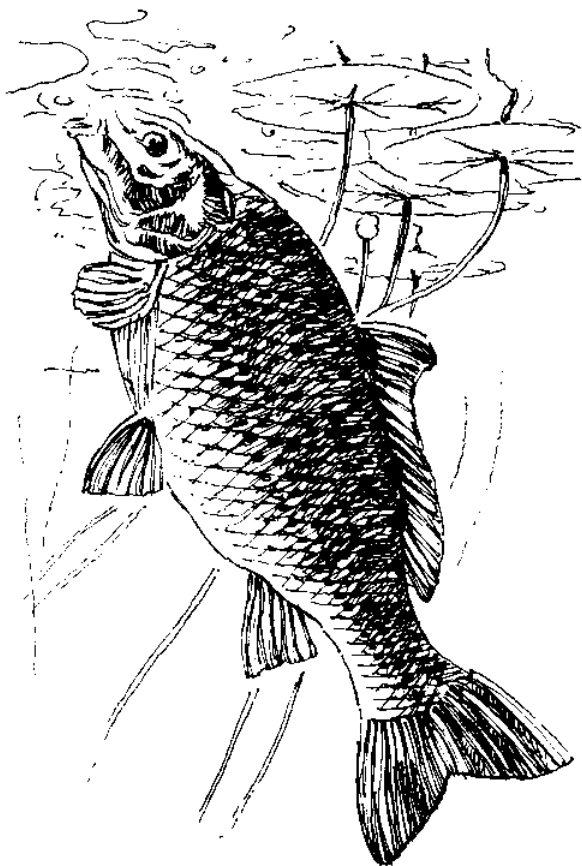
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# Aquatic Nuisance Species in Alabama



Circular ANR-1108

MASGP-98-005

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# Aquatic Nuisance Species in Alabama

Alabama is fortunate to have many diverse habitats supporting numerous kinds of plants and animals. Most of these are native species—they occur here naturally. Another term for native is *indigenous* meaning to exist or grow naturally in a region.

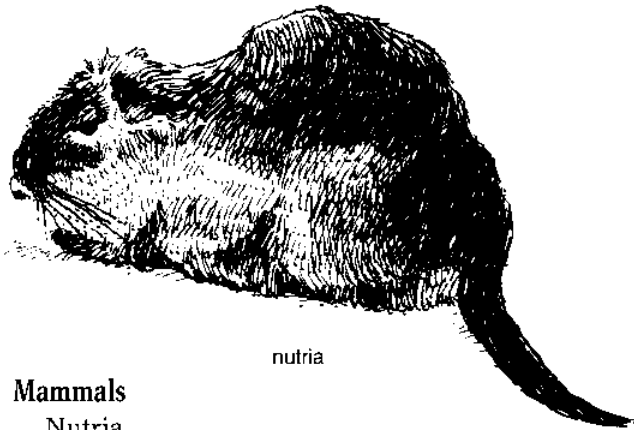
Alabama also has become home to a number of non-native (non-indigenous) plants and animals. These are sometimes referred to as introduced or exotic species. Some of these species such as fire ants have become major pests. Others such as the smallmouth bass are welcome.

Non-native pest species living in or near water are often called *aquatic nuisance species*. Due to the damage caused by some of these invaders, such as the zebra mussel, the aquatic plant hydrilla, and many others, federal legislation, the National Invasive Species Act, has been developed.

The following are some non-native aquatic species found in Alabama. Not all are considered nuisance species.

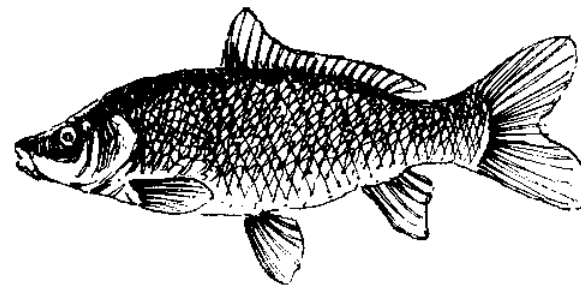
## Reptiles

Ouachita map turtle

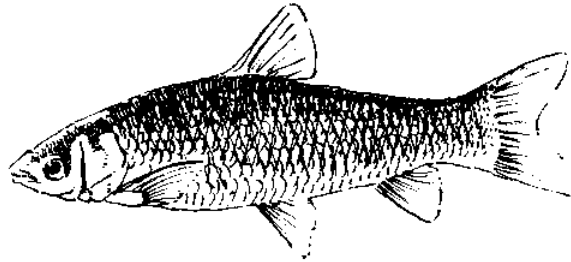


nutria

**Mammals**  
Nutria



common carp



grass carp

## Fishes

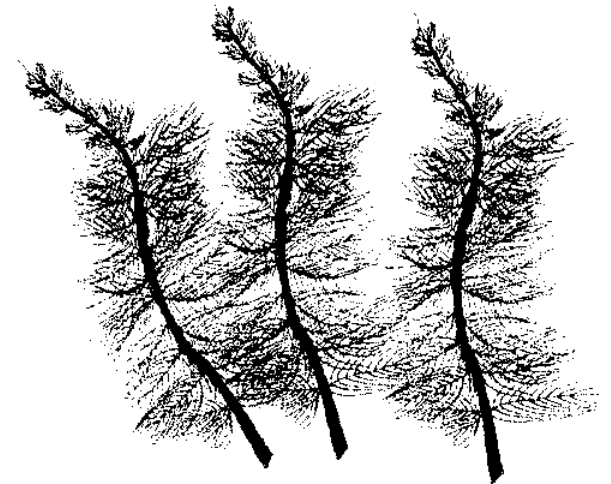
Alabama has 48 known non-natives. Some of these are native elsewhere in the South but not to a particular body of water in Alabama. Others, such as tilapia, common carp, grass carp, and goldfish, are native to faraway places.



Zebra mussels

## Mollusks

Zebra mussel and Asian clam



Eurasian watermilfoil

## Plants

Eight non-natives including water hyacinth, hydrilla, and Eurasian watermilfoil are found in Alabama.

## Common methods of introduction include:

- Release or escape of privately or commercially owned animals including aquarium plants and animals.
- Intentional and accidental introductions for stocking and farming
- Release of bait fish
- Escape from aquaculture facilities
- Discharge of ballast water from ships

## The potential impacts can include:

- Displacement, reduction, or extinction of native species
- Competition with native species for food and habitat
- Transmission of diseases or parasites
- Habitat alteration
- Disruption of the natural balance among native organisms
- Added costs to municipal and industrial water users

# What can you do?

Once introduced into a body of water, aquatic nuisance species are very difficult, if not impossible, to control. Prevention, therefore, is the first line of defense.

## Boaters and fishermen can do their part by:

- Removing any plants and animals from their boats and fishing gear before leaving any body of water
- Draining water from motor, live well, bilge, and transom wells on land before leaving any body of water
- Emptying bait bucket on land before leaving any body of water
- Washing and drying boat, trailer, tackle, and other boating equipment

## Aquarium owners and water gardeners can help by:

- Never dumping the contents of an aquarium into a body of water—not even a puddle or ditch
- Disposing of aquatic plants in the garbage or drying and composting
- Responsibly handling the disposal of pet fish or other animals. It is recommended that they be placed in a bag and put in the freezer or taken to a veterinarian for humane disposal.

Aquatic nuisance species are not a trivial problem. Zebra mussels have altered ecosystems and threatened the sport fishing industry in some areas. Municipalities and industries in the Great Lakes area spend \$360,000 per year on zebra mussel control. In Florida the cost of controlling hydrilla exceeds \$14 million per year. Do your part by following the simple procedures outlined here to prevent the spread of aquatic nuisance species.

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