

At one time, carp were deliberately put in lake

Carp get into Lake Koshkonong from the Rock River and its dozens of tributaries, said Don Bush, fish biologist for the Department of Natural Resources.

But in the 1880s, or perhaps later, they were put into the lake deliberately. Bush believes carp fingerlings were dumped off the railroad bridges. But some sources blame a famous sporting club on the lake.

The federal government imported carp in 1831 from Germany, where they were valued as a table fish, according to a 1945 article on the history of the Black Hawk Club.

"Yates Wentworth, the manager of the Black Hawk Hunting Club, received a request to stock them in Lake Koshkonong," the article states.

"He did so, and in later years reminisced about meeting the train and bringing in several cans full of carp down to the lake in his small wagon and throwing them in.

"He admitted he thought he had made a mistake in accepting the fish."

The carp multiplied quickly, and a thriving carp fishing industry arose in response. By 1908, some people thought the seining operations were getting in the way, according to the Jefferson County Democrat, a newspaper of the day.

The people of Fort Atkinson objected that the seiners interfered with sport fishing. Others objected because they believed the seining destroyed wild celery, wild rice and other duck food.

Most agreed that carp removal efforts were a good thing, because the carp were uprooting vegetation and eating the spawn of game fish.

The state took over the carp removal effort in 1938 and ran it until 1975. The state sold the carp on the market but put the money back into the general fund, rather than using it to pay for the removal system, said Bush, who wrote a paper titled "The History of Carp in Lake Koshkonong."

The state sold the equipment in 1975 and began to designate private contractors to remove the carp. The contractors actually pay for the privilege of working Lake Koshkonong.

Steve Kallenbach, who has the Koshkonong contract with John Bruring, complained that he had bid some \$5,000 more for the Koshkonong rights than the next lowest bidder.

"We did it because we ran out of fish last year," Kallenbach said.

--Steve Engelbert/The Janesville Gazette Staff

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