

MORE NON-NATIVES PROPOSED BY STATE FISHERIES EXPERTS!

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I recently finished reading an article by Ken Schultz in the December issue of Field & Stream Magazine entitled, "Is There a Giant Fish in Your Future?" Schultz quoted "fisheries experts" and biologists from several states, including Michigan, New York, Illinois, Texas, etc. all praising plans to introduce larger-than-normal fishes to state waterways. These plans, including triploids* of native and introduced species, newly imported giant species and hybrids of native and non-native varieties. They should all trigger alarm bells in the minds of native-fish aquarists and all conservation-minded persons in North America.

One would think that biology experts the world over would take a lesson from such horrors as the introduction of the rabbit to Australia, the introduction (accidental or deliberate) of non-native fishes to Florida, and the quite accidental introduction of the Sea Lamprey to the Great Lakes. They should be concentrating their efforts on habitat restoration and pollution control, and on upgrading and maintaining established native species, rather than on introduction of new, larger fishes solely for the benefit of sport anglers.

These new fishes, natural or created through triploidization or hybridization, will, just like the rabbit in Australia, have no natural predators except anglers. Who can imagine an osprey or gull making off with a 200/-pound salmon triploid, or a bear batting a 68.5-pound Seeforellen** from the water? Even the Sea Lamprey, which devastated our native trout, would, I believe, find it difficult to sap the energy from such formidable prey!

Perhaps of most direct concern to you and me is the direct threat. How many of our beloved darters, shiners, dace, sculpins, sunfish, and killies will these fish have to consume on a daily basis to survive and grow to these sizes? How long could our native species thrive or even survive such predacious activity? What about our native species that are currently threatened or endangered? This could be the straw that will break the species' backs.

I think aquarists, not only in the states involved in this research but in neighboring states and provinces, should write their legislators to protest such moves, outlining our concerns. Our permits may not generate the revenue of angler permits, but nevertheless, our united voices represent interests--those of native fish species--that ought to be heard.

*Fish that "have three sets of chromosomes instead of the normal two as the result of exposing fertilized eggs to high temperature."

**a lake-dwelling Brown Trout found predominantly in deep, clear-water lakes in Austria, Switzerland, and Germany.