

Eating invasive species may help eliminate them



Tahoe Lobster Co. was the first to harvest invasive crawfish from Lake Tahoe .
Photo/LTN file

By Ramit Plushnick-Masti, Washington Post

HOUSTON – It seems like a simple proposition: American lakes, rivers and offshore waters are filling up with destructive fish and crustaceans originally from other parts of the world, and many of them are potential sources of food.

So why not control these invasive populations by getting people to eat them?

The idea gained momentum recently when lionfish, which invaded the Gulf of Mexico, were successfully marketed to restaurants and appear to be in decline.

But businesses and scientists have struggled to repeat this apparent triumph with other species. Some, such as Asian carp, are not appetizing to Americans. Others, such as feral hogs, reproduce too quickly for the strategy to make a dent. And then there's the question of whether turning the animals into sought-after cuisine undermines the larger goal of eliminating them.

“Eating invasive species is not a silver bullet,” said Laura Huffman, the Nature Conservancy’s director in Texas. But it can still be “a way to get people engaged in the topic and in the solution.”

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