

Local carp help feed the hungry

The Knysna Municipality has found an innovative and practical solution in addressing the ecological challenge of the Groenvlei Carp infestation, resulting in valued assistance to the less fortunate.

“During the latter part of 2019 we were made aware of problem of overpopulation of Carp in Sedgfield’s Groenvlei,” said Knysna Acting Municipal Manager, Dr Michele Gratz.

Carp are various species of oily freshwater fish from the family Cyprinidae, a very large group of fish native to Europe and Asia. “While carp is consumed in many parts of the world, they are generally considered as invasive species here and other parts of Africa,” explained Dr Gratz.

“With these carp outside their native range, they have few natural predators here, meaning that there is nothing to keep their numbers in check. “As mention by SAIAB [South African Institute of Aquatic Biodiversity] scientist Dr Josephine Pegg, Carp are considered one of the more problematic invasive species, as they eat anything and do really well in poor conditions - they thrive where other fish don’t, feeding mostly along the bottom of ponds, rivers and lakes which overturns sediment.” In Groenvlei the carp churn up rotten material continuously upsetting the balance of the lake. Dr Gratz added that “Cape Nature, the custodians of Groenvlei have issued a permit to four private individuals to harvest this nutrient rich fish.

Now the whole fish will to be distributed by Gift of the Giver, using the Knysna Municipal Food Parcel Database to ensure fair and equitable distribution.

“We are extremely grateful that the charity organisation, Gift of the Givers has recognised the nutritional value of the carp and are offering cold storage for the fresh fish, which they will be adding to the food parcels which will be delivered to those in need within Greater Knysna. Garden Route District Municipality Health Inspectors were consulted when finalising the cold chain management process of the fish once caught.”

To ensure the fish is safe for human consumption the water quality was tested. An internal and external examination of a fish was further undertaken by fresh water ecologist Ben de Waal. Finally a microbiological examination was undertaken at Outeniqua Laboratory.

Carp forms part of a staple diets across the globe, and can be prepared in many different ways. It is a great source of many nutritionally important substances, particularly lean proteins and omega-3 fatty acids. These fatty acids can further reduce blood pressure, eliminating strain on the cardiovascular system, and lower your chances of experiencing a heart attack or stroke.

“We have produced an informative brochure on how to gut and clean the fish which will be including in the Gift of the Givers fish food parcel.

Local Sedgefield NGO, Mobile Meals, was approached by the Knysna Municipality with the offer of using the fish to supplement the food parcels they supply to numerous soup kitchens in the Smutsville and Sizamile areas. Mobile Meals declined the offer as they do not have adequate capacity to process the fish.

“I extend my heartfelt thanks to all those involved in this project and thank them for their innovative thinking and problem solving, especially as part of the solution involves feeding those less fortunate,” concluded Dr Gratz.

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