



African Catfish, *Clarias gariepinus*: An Eco-terrorist Destroying Delicate Ecological Balance in Aquatic Ecosystems of National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries in India

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Abstract: African Catfish, *Clarias Gariepinus* (Bruchell, 1822) - an omnivores fish was illegally introduced in India in late 1980s. But soon it became invasive and started eating native fish species and other aquatic fauna. After receiving number of complaints from environmentalists, farmers and fisheries research organizations, Govt. of India, Ministry of Agriculture banned its culture in 1997. However, its culture, sale and purchase still continue illegally. It has invaded almost all inland aquatic ecosystems of the country and is particularly posing a big threat to aquatic ecosystems of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries of India. The devastation of the delicate aquatic ecological balance being caused by this eco-terrorist including loss of habitat for migratory birds by eating phytoplankton, snails, slugs, gastropods, arthropods, crustaceans, amphibians, prawns, shrimps, reptiles, fish and small birds in village ponds, lakes, rivers and other water bodies has been discussed in the paper. The legal framework for dealing with this invasive alien species in India has been described and some management measures have been suggested in the paper. The cause of worry however, is that many forest and wildlife managers are not familiar with the invasive and destructive nature of *Clarias gariepinus*

Key Words: African Catfish, *Clarias gariepinus*, Invasive Alien Species, National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries
