

Holy Carp

Naked carp were once plentiful in Qinghai Lake but virtually disappeared when dams blocked spawning habitat. These fish provided food for people and migrating birds as well as being an important part of religious ceremony. The Chinese government recognized the ecological and cultural significance of this fish and is taking action to restore them to their original levels.

In 2003, biologists from Northwest Marine Technology assisted scientists from the Qinghai Fishery Department with coded wire tagging 16,500 hatchery produced naked carp for release into Qinghai Lake.

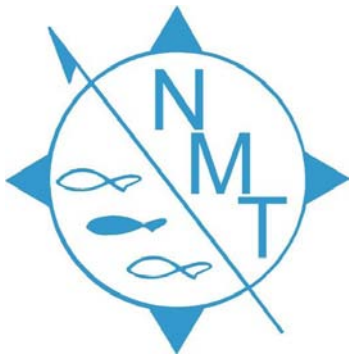
Two sizes classes of fish were tagged in the nape musculature: small (averaging 50 mm TL) and large (from 100 mm to 250 mm TL). Small fish were held in the hatchery for further grow-out while the large fish were released into the Shaliu River which feeds into Qinghai Lake. Both groups had good tag retention and negligible mortality.

This was the first of many releases of naked carp into Qinghai Lake. As the released fish mature and return to the remaining spawning streams that feed into the lake, the effectiveness of the stocking program will be evaluated.



Above: Naked carp *Gymocypris przewalskii* are predominantly found in Qinghai Lake on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. From 1960 to 1995, the estimated biomass of naked carp in this lake dropped about 90%.

Left: The local Tibetan people have a religious custom of releasing naked carp into Qinghai Lake to show their respect for nature. While commercial fishing is no longer permitted, historically, Tibetan fishers released a portion of their catch live.



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