

300 Amur Freed In Lake Killarney

Presumably husky enough to look a big-mouth bass in the eye and keep on munching hydrilla, 300 white amur averaging 2½ pounds each were released Friday in Winter Park's Lake Killarney.

Nick Sassic, aquatic weed control supervisor of the Orange County Pollution Control Department, and Dr. Bill Haller, associate professor of agronomy at the University of Florida, netted the Gainesville-spawned fish and freed them after sluicing their tank with Killarney water to ease the shock of a 40-degree warmup in the 85-degree lake.

THE EXPERIMENT, another in Lake Holden and a much larger project in Lake Conway, are parts of the first large-scale test to find whether the controversial Asian fish can rid Florida lakes of obnoxious weeds without destroying necessary

vegetation.

In November 1974 about 5,000 fingerling amur — 5-inch, 4-ounce fish — were freed in Lake Killarney. But since amur are vegetarians and big-mouth bass are not, the bass are believed to

Draglines Reenter Hyacinth Fight,
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have gobbled up all or most of the newcomers.

An amur census is virtually impossible. One of the ways of estimating the number of fish in a body of water is by finding out how frequently they're caught by fishermen. Amur don't get caught.

THERE'S ONE exception even to that rule. Sassic told of a golf course in Miami where the silvery, carp-like amur, after emptying a small lake of all its

plant life, were fed on grass from the mowers.

"They got conditioned," Sassic said. "Some have been caught with Bermuda grass as bait."

Water quality is analyzed before introducing the amur, then tested again at intervals to determine the effect of the fish.

THE AMUR, a river fish in its native Siberia, Manchuria and China, does not reproduce in Florida lakes, Sassic said. Once it is determined how many are needed for a proper balance of plants, he said the lack of spawning will simplify stocking problems.

"No one is sure what the stocking rate should be," he said. "We're going slowly until we find out. We don't want any of the lakes to be picked clean of vegetation."

— DOROTHY MADLEE