

Asian carp in the NW

Three species of invasive Asian carp – black carp (*Mylopharyngodon piceus*), bighead carp (*Hypophthalmichthys nobilis*), and silver carp (*H. molitrix*) – are making the news east of the Rockies, but thankfully are not known to occur in the Northwest. These fish provide competition for native species that depend on the same food and habitat. Additionally, some of these carp can reach the astonishing size of 100 pounds, and the silver carp is known to leap out of the water when disturbed by noise, causing physical harm to boaters and anglers. A 2008 risk evaluation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Serviceⁱ determined that black, bighead and silver carp could find a home in the Columbia Basin, posing a significant threat to our native aquatic species.



Black carp



Bighead carp



Silver carp

While these three carp are currently only a potential danger to our Northwest waters, two other species already occur here. The common carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), native to Europe and Asia, was introduced to the U.S. as early as the 1830's as a food source. This species thrives in a wide variety of conditions and are highly tolerant of poor water quality. The common carp are bottom feeders, meaning they sift through mud on the water's floor. This type of feeding habit causes water quality problems and destroys the spawning beds and eggs of other fish species. In Oregon, one of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge's biggest challenges is dealing

common carp impacts, including uprooting aquatic vegetation and producing silt plumes, which have been linked to a major decline in waterfowl populations at the refuge.



Common carp



Grass carp

The grass carp (*Cteno pharyngodon idella*), also found in Northwest waters, was first brought to the U.S. from China in 1963 to control vegetation and algae blooms. Many states only permit use of sterile grass carp, as certified by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. However, 100% sterility is not always certain, and grass carp do not always stay where they're put. Grass carp are long-lived and large, reaching 3.9 ft and weighing 40 pounds as adults. They can be found in lakes, ponds, pools and backwaters of large rivers. They are attracted to large, slow-flowing or standing bodies of water with plenty of fresh water vegetation. Grass carp eat up to three times their own body weight daily. Their ability to eliminate aquatic weeds can extend to inadvertent elimination of valued native aquatic plants. Grass carp can also cause increased turbidity and other water quality problems.

Be aware of carp regulations in your state, and never take it upon yourself to stock or move fish (carp or other) from one pond, lake or stream to another. If you suspect you find silver, bighead, or black carp, please contact 1-877-STOPANS.

ⁱ http://asiancarp.org/Documents/AsianCarp_PNWRiskEvaluation_022208.pdf