



# SILVER CARP

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## Diagnosis

The silver carp is characterized by a stout body, large head, massive opercles (gill covers), the head and opercles having no scales, bluntly-rounded snout, mouth terminal that appears to be upside down, barbels that are absent and the jaws having no teeth. The eyes are small, located far forward below the angle of the jaw and project downward. Scales are small, cycloid and cover the entire body. The lateral line is complete with 85 -108 scales in series. It can weigh up to 60 pounds. The silver carp may be distinguished from the bighead carp by having sponge-like gill rakers, whereas the bighead carp have long thread-like gill rakers. The keeled abdomen of the silver carp extends from the anal vent almost to the base of the head, whereas the keel of the bighead carp extends from the anal vent to the base of the pectoral fins.

## Ecology

This fish tends not to spawn in still water or small streams, but in large flood-swollen rivers. Spawning occurs after spring rains have flooded the rivers and when the temperature of the water reaches 77 F. Eggs are fertilized externally and need to float downstream. Regarded as a filter-feeder, consuming mainly phytoplankton, this fish is capable of eating between 20 and 120 percent of its body weight each day. The specialized gill rakers enable this food selectivity. Like all planktivores, they eat from the bottom of the food chain, thusly competing with native planktivores, juvenile fishes and mussels.

It is hypothesized that silver carp may jump into the air as an evolved natural response to avoid predators in their native range in Asia. They may also jump when startled by boat motors and as a result of induced water pressure from boat hulls. They have been known to land in boats, damage property and injure people.

## Habitat & Distribution

This fish inhabits freshwater riverine systems and confluent lakes, impoundments and reservoirs. Silver carp are native to several major Pacific drainages in eastern Asia from the Amur River of far eastern Russia, south through much of the eastern half of China to Pearl River. Its introduced range is worldwide. In the United States, it is currently spread throughout the Mississippi River system. In some areas of the Illinois River, where habitat and water quality are severely impaired, they comprise more than 95 percent of the biomass. In the Illinois and Mississippi rivers, bighead carp tend to invade areas a few years before silver carp get there; however, silver carp usually achieve higher population numbers in these invaded areas. Silver carp were originally imported to the southern United States in the 1970s to help aquaculture and wastewater treatment facilities keep retention ponds clean and to provide fresh fishes for human consumption.

## Status

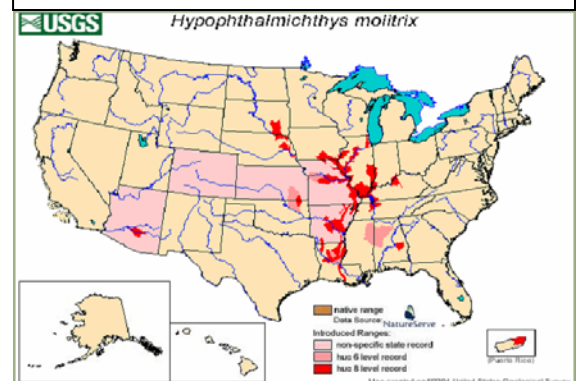
Silver carp may be currently found in small numbers within the Dresden Pool of the Illinois River, where the Kankakee and Des Plaines rivers meet near Channahon, IL. No silver carp have been collected closer to Lake Michigan than the Dresden Pool, to date.

<b>Common Name</b>	Silver carp
<b>Genus &amp; Species</b>	<i>Hypophthalmichthys molitrix</i>
<b>Family</b>	Cyprinidae (minnows and carps)
<b>Order</b>	Cypriniformes (carps, minnows, loaches, suckers)
<b>Class</b>	Actinopterygii (ray-finned fishes)



Above: Photo of silver carp

Below: Map of silver carp distribution



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