

Bighead and Silver Carp WATCH

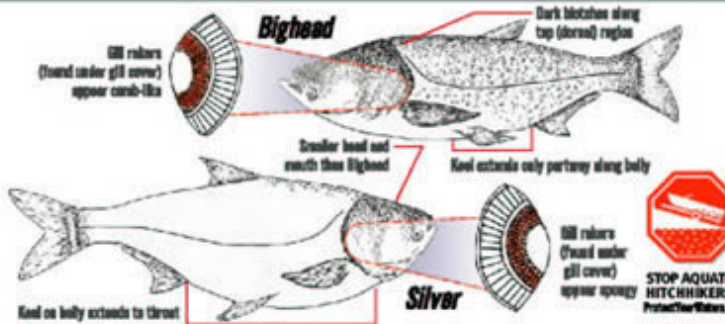
Bighead



Silver



How To Identify Bighead and Silver Carp (adults shown)



General Characteristics

- Low-set eye; large upturned mouth without barbels
- Scaleless head; body scales very small
- Adults may be more than 60 lbs. in weight and 4 ft. in length
- Juveniles difficult to distinguish from local baitfish species
- May jump out of water when disturbed by boat motors

Photos: David Rivka, URSI, IN Sea Grant
 Illustrations: Martha Kneuer, URSI
 Illinois Natural History Survey

Bighead and Silver Carp

Bighead (*Hypophthalmichthys nobilis*) and silver carp (*H. molitrix*) are invasive fish spreading to lakes, rivers and streams in several areas of North America, particularly the Mississippi River and Great Lakes regions. Because they feed on plankton, these fish compete for food directly with native organisms including mussels, all larval fishes and some adult fishes. This competition could reduce numbers of native species, which would ultimately affect the entire food web.

These Asian carp were brought to North America in the early 1970s to remove algae from aquaculture ponds. By the early 1980s, both species had escaped to open waters of the Mississippi River Basin. Use of juveniles as bait and release of adults into new habitats contribute to their spread. Early detection of isolated populations may help slow or restrict the spread of these Asian carp. Your help in reporting new sightings and preventing the spread of these and other non-native aquatic species is vital for protecting our waters.

What you can do

- Learn to identify bighead and silver carp (see back cover).
- Dispose of unwanted live bait in the trash.
- Never release live fish from one body of water into another.
- Drain lake or river water from livewell and bilge before leaving access.
- Inspect and remove aquatic plants and animals from boat, motor and trailer.
- Report new sightings—note exact location; freeze specimen in a sealed plastic bag; and call the Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant Program in Zion, IL (847-872-8677), the Illinois DNR in Topoka, IL (309-868-7531), or the Indiana DNR, Div. of Fish and Wildlife in Indianapolis, IN (317-232-4093).

REMEMBER: Know the rules!

Specimens are needed to confirm sightings, but some jurisdictions prohibit possession of Asian carp and other invasive aquatic animals and plants. Others may restrict possession for specific uses only. Contact your local natural resource management agency for instructions. Unauthorized introduction of fish, crayfish or plants into the wild is illegal. Protect your property and our waters.

Produced by Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, Illinois Natural History Survey, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the Great Lakes Sea Grant Network. 2003. IISG-03-07