

bighead carp *Hypophthalmichthys nobilis*

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Actinopterygii

Order: Cypriniformes

Family: Xenocyprididae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, nonnative

FEATURES

The bighead carp reaches a maximum size of 30 inches in length and over 40 pounds in weight. Its life span is about eight to 15 years. The heavy body has a large head, upturned mouth and small scales. The eyes are located in the front, lower part of the head and are pointed downward. The back is slate gray, the sides are silver and the belly is white. The body often has scattered, dark blotches.

BEHAVIORS

The bighead carp lives in the lower reaches of tributary streams and backwaters and the main channel of major rivers. This fish reaches maturity between the ages of two and 10 years. It spawns from April to June. The female deposits about 500,000 eggs. The bighead carp eats plankton that it strains from the water. This species is a native of eastern China that was introduced into Arkansas in 1973 and was present in the Mississippi River by 1982. It has expanded rapidly and become well-established in Illinois.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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