

silver carp *Hypophthalmichthys molitrix*

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Actinopterygii

Order: Cypriniformes

Family: Xenocypridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, nonnative

FEATURES

The silver carp is a deep-bodied fish that is compressed side-to-side. There is an abdominal keel from the throat to the vent. It is silver when young. Mature silver carp are green-brown on the back becoming lighter on the sides to silver on the belly. The fins are dark. There are no scales on the head or gill covers. The mouth is large and upturned. Teeth are present in the throat. The eyes are placed close to the mouth on the midline of the body and are slightly turned down. The gill rakers are branched. The maximum length of a silver carp is about 41 and one-half inches, and the maximum weight is about 110 pounds.

BEHAVIORS

Silver carp mature at about two years of age and can live for about 20 years. They live in rivers and lakes, feeding on phytoplankton and zooplankton. Adults spawn when there is a high current, turbid water, temperatures above 59 degrees Fahrenheit and plenty of oxygen in the water. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lists all forms of live silver carp, their gametes, viable eggs and hybrids as injurious fish. This species was originally imported to the United States in 1973 from eastern Asia, where it is native, and stocked for phytoplankton control and also as a food fish. By 1980 the species was discovered in natural waters, probably as a result of escapes from fish hatcheries and other types of aquaculture facilities. It has spread tremendously, in huge numbers, throughout rivers and streams. Commercial fisheries have been established along the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers to try and reduce the numbers of silver carp. This species is edible, and efforts are being made to increase its consumption by humans. Silver carp swim in schools and are known for jumping out of the water when disturbed, which can cause damage to people and boats.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

rivers and streams; lakes, ponds and reservoirs

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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