

Non-Native Carps Introduction:

Introduced non-indigenous carps belong to the Cyprinidae family (the family containing carps and minnows). Cyprinidae is the largest family of freshwater fishes, with its species spread over every continent except South America and Australia. Several notable introductions of non-native carp species have occurred (Schofield et al. 2005). We focus on five species: common carp, black carp, grass carp, silver carp, and bighead carp, and more detail on each of these species is provided on subsequent fact sheets. Grass carp, silver carp, bighead carp, and common carp, have invaded ecosystems already in regions around the country. It is believed that black carp represents a pressing risk for invasion.

Bighead carp can reach lengths of around a meter, and are distinguished by their head size and shape, and eye location. They were originally introduced for the purpose of controlling algae (USGS 2005a). Black carp can grow to 2 meters long, and primarily feed on mollusks, snails, and other freshwater invertebrates. A handful of possible reproducing populations in the United States have been identified (USGS 2005b). Common carp are notorious for their ability to uproot aquatic vegetation and stir up waterway bottoms, thereby increasing turbidity (ISSG 2006a). Silver carp have mainly become established in the Mississippi River system, and feed by filtering phytoplankton through their gills (ISSG 2006b). Similar to common carp, grass carp has the potential to alter ecosystems by uprooting vegetation and thereby altering pH, turbidity, and water chemistry (Goodchild 1999).



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