

# INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!

## COMMON CARP

(*Cyprinus carpio*)

### HAVE YOU SEEN THIS ANIMAL?

#### DESCRIPTION

Common Carp...

- Have long, tapering dorsal fins.
- Have shiny brown/yellow scales.
- Have a forward-protruding mouth.
- May occasionally exhibit decorative, brighter colours like orange, white and black; such individuals are sometimes called Koi.
- 2 pairs of barbels.
- Large and thick scales.
- Average length: 35 cm, but can grow up to 120 cm.



Image credit: [www.ncfishes.com](http://www.ncfishes.com) (with permission)

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#### PRIMARY THREAT:

*Common Carp are one of the most invasive fish species globally and can cause significant degradation to freshwater ecosystems by increasing water turbidity, disturbing aquatic plant communities and altering aquatic food webs. Populations can grow very quickly and displace native fish species.*

#### SPREAD

Common carp are being intentionally released into the environment by pet owners or are escaping from outdoor ponds and aquariums. They are adaptable in their diet and can survive across a wide range of temperatures and in low-oxygen environments. Common Carp reproduce very quickly, with females laying more than a million eggs in a season.

Common Carp inhabit warm, deep, slow-flowing and still waters such as lowland rivers and large, well vegetated lakes. They are hardy and tolerant of a wide variety of conditions but generally favor large water bodies with slow flowing or standing water and soft bottom sediments. Adults often undertake considerable spawning migrations to suitable backwaters and flooded meadows.



Image credit: Hublagrange, iNaturalist (CC-BY-NC)

For more information: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/invasive-species>



# COMMON CARP (*Cyprinus carpio*)



**Common Carp**

Image Credit: Duane Raver, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (CC0)

## DISTRIBUTION & STATUS

Common Carp are native to rivers draining the Black, Caspian and Aral Sea basins, as well as in the Danube River in Europe. They have spread or been introduced globally and are one of the most invasive fish species in the world. In B.C., their current extent includes numerous recorded occurrences in the Kootenay-Boundary, Thompson-Okanagan, South Coast and West Coast regions.

## LOOK-ALIKES:

It can be difficult to distinguish Common Carp from **five native sucker species** that belong to the genus *Catostomus*, and Goldfish (*Carassius auratus*). For example, both Common Carp and Goldfish have serrated spines on their dorsal and anal fins.

**Goldfish** are distinguished from Common Carp by their:

- **lack of barbels** (whisker-like projections)

**Native suckers** are distinguished from Common Carp by their:

- downwards-facing mouth, which is slightly overhung by the snout
- cleft between lower lips, with folds or bumps on lips



**Goldfish**

Image Credit: Sercfisheries, iNaturalist (CC-BY-NC)



**Common Carp**

Image Credit: Jcb01, iNaturalist (CC-BY-NC)

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**White Sucker**

Image Credit: Brian Gratwicke, Wikimedia Commons (CC-BY-2)

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Learn to identify Common Carp.
- Don't let it loose! Do not possess, breed, ship, transfer or release Common Carp in B.C.
- Raise awareness to avoid spread into B.C. freshwaters.
- Before purchasing Common Carp, be aware of the species and the size it will potentially grow to.
- Never use live fish as bait.



**Koi**

Image Credit: Brendan Anderson, WLRs (CC0)

## DID YOU KNOW?

Koi are a domesticated variety of Common Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) that have been selectively bred for color. The Common Carp was introduced from China to Japan, where selective breeding of the common carp in the 1820s in the Niigata region resulted in koi.

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