

FACT sheet



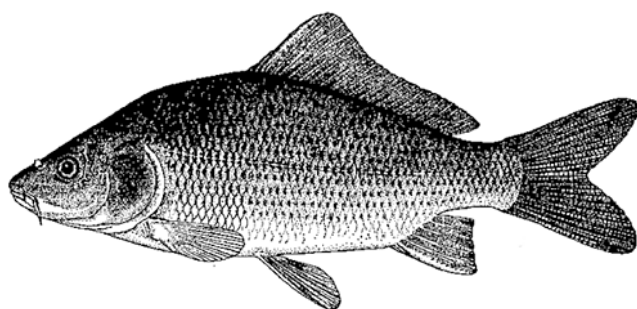
OUR CATCHMENT - Carp

Carp in Australia

Although known as European Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), this fish actually originates from Asia. Introduced into Australia in the 1800s, it was not until the 1960s that carp numbers dramatically increased.

Carp can grow up to 1.2m long and weigh up to 60kg and are one of the most abundant freshwater fish living in the Murray-Darling Basin. The fish is characterised by two barbels or 'whiskers' on each corner of their mouth with a single dorsal fin and forked tail, they can vary in colour from bronze to olive green.

Carp are a popular angling fish in Europe, however in Australia they are considered a pest.



Rabbit of our rivers

Much like that other famous pest, the rabbit, carp are an introduced species brought to these shores with perhaps good intentions, but with little thought for the future. They are similar to rabbits in that their population explosions have the potential to cause immense ecological and environmental problems. In response to this concern, carp were declared a noxious species in Victoria in 1962.

Carp problems in our waterways

Carp have caused and continue to be responsible for several environmental degradation issues. Their ability to put up with poor water quality, and periods of dry waterways, as well as their filter feeding, make them an aggressive competitor. Carp are fast breeders, and may produce one million eggs by the time they weigh 4-5kg. They are also thought to eat the fingerlings (baby fish) and eggs of some native fish species (*Source: Southern Fisheries 1997*).

Although classified as a freshwater fish, carp are able to show tolerance to waters of low oxygen and increased salinity allowing them to colonise most Australian waters.

Carp pose an economic threat by affecting industries that rely on pristine water quality and aquatic habitats including domestic and irrigation water, agriculture, tourism and commercial and recreational fisheries.

Carp have been reported to live for more than 30 years and have been known to grow up to 50kg in weight!

Messy eaters

Carp's diets are variable and include such things as aquatic molluscs, crustaceans, insect larvae, soft plant material and detritus (during winter when other food is unavailable). They are benthic (or bottom) feeders and feed by sucking in water and then filtering out food using their gill rakers.

In particular, carp's effect on native fish populations through habitat destruction is severe. Because of the way they feed they are known to increase the turbidity of water and to uproot and destroy submerged aquatic vegetation that is essential for the survival of native fish species. The existence of such vegetation would usually provide cover, food

and sometimes spawning sites for fish such as the Murray Cod, Yellow Belly, Silver Perch and Golden Perch.

Solutions to the problem

There are a number of ways authorities are attempting to decrease the carp population in our rivers and these include:

- Biological control via predation and the development of daughterless carp technology where the genes controlling sexual development of fish are blocked to exclusively produce males.
- Physical control such as removal of carp via electrofishing and commercial fishing, or by exclusion which uses barriers and fish traps.
- Chemical control via bait or poisons added directly to the stream have also been used.

In recent years there has been a gradual increase in the use of carp as a fish worthy of being eaten by the most fussy of eaters. It is now recognised that carp numbers can be controlled by encouraging its value as a resource for commercial and recreational anglers.

Tips on carving up a carp



- ◆ Treat carp as you would any other fish after capture – bleed it properly and chill it
- ◆ Fish about 750 grams and over are the most suitable, although the large fish can be coarse
- ◆ Some people believe that carp has a muddy taste – but this is untrue as long as you skin the fish
- ◆ When filleting the fish, don't waste the belly flap which is boneless and considered the 'prime cut' in Asia

Fishing carp

Due to the potential of carp to cause ecological and environmental degradation, legislation has been enacted to prevent their

spread throughout Victorian waterways.

As carp are considered to be a noxious fish, it is an offence to possess, transport and release live carp or use live carp as bait. All carp caught must be killed straight away and disposed of appropriately. Carp and any remains are not to be thrown back into the waterways nor left on the bank or surrounding area of the waterway.



Catch a Carp

Catch a Carp days are often organised around the catchment and are not only a great way to help eradicate carp from our local creeks and rivers but the days also help to inform the community about the extent of the carp problem.



For further information

About fishing regulations for both inland and marine waters please refer to the *Victorian Recreational Fishing Guide*.

Please visit the Goulburn Valley Water website: www.gvwater.vic.gov.au

or contact a Goulburn Valley Water Education Officer:

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