

North Carolina Sport Fish Profiles



Common carp

Scientific Name:

Cyprinus carpio

Identification:

The common carp usually has an olive- to-green back, fading to a yellow-brown side, with a yellow belly. The fins are yellow to yellow-red. Two pairs of barbels are present on the upper jaw, which help to distinguish carp from suckers. The mouth is



Illustration by Duane Raver

small and is supported by tough cartilage. The carp has small teeth on the back of the last gill arch near the throat. These teeth, similar to human molars, are used for crushing shells, seeds and plants.

Habitats and Habits:

Carp are native to Eurasia but were introduced into North America during the 1800s. They can now be found in lakes and rivers throughout the United States. Carp are routinely found along the shoreline of lakes and rivers, where they feed on aquatic plants, algae, invertebrates and, on occasion, small fish.

Their ability to taste and smell is very acute. They usually suck food off the bottom, along with silt and debris. Food items are strained out and chewed up, while non-food items are spit out. These feeding habits often cause muddy water and, in extreme cases, can impair aquatic plant growth and cover fish eggs with silt. Carp are very strong swimmers, and large individuals are common. As a result, they are popular among some anglers. Carp are a popular food fish in many countries, although they are bony.

Fishing Techniques:

While carp occasionally will take slow-moving lures, most anglers prefer using natural baits. Dough balls, oatmeal, cheese, worms, corn and even soap fished on the bottom are popular choices. Some anglers broadcast or “chum” corn or cheese over an area prior to fishing them with the hopes of attracting carp.

Good Places to Fish:

Slow-flowing rivers and practically any lake in North Carolina hold common carp. Look for them in the back of sandy or muddy-bottomed coves and quiet river sections.

Other Information:

NCARP Minimum Requirements: 20 pounds or 34 inches

State Record: 48 pounds, from a pond in Mecklenburg County, March 11, 1986

World Record: 75 lbs., 11 oz., Lac de St. Cassien, France, May 21, 1987*

* Anglers provide information on their potential world-record catches directly to the International Game Fish Association, which maintains the world records for sport fishing.