

Asian Carps

Threatening Ontario's native fishes

What Ontario is Doing

To prevent these unwanted invaders from coming into the province, Ontario has regulated four species of Asian carp (Silver Carp, Bighead Carp, Grass Carp, and Black Carp) as **prohibited** under the Invasive Species Act. For more information on the Invasive Species Act and Regulations visit

www.ontario.ca/invasionON.

Background

Asian carps were brought from Asia to North America in the 1960s and 70s. Since then they have migrated north through U.S. waterways towards the Great Lakes. Preventing Asian carps from spreading into the Great Lakes is the best way to prevent harm to Ontario's native fish species.

Asian carps (Silver Carp, Bighead Carp, Grass Carp, Black Carp):

- Are successful invaders that have replaced native species in areas of the Mississippi River and its tributaries
- Make up more than 50 per cent of the fish by weight in some parts of the Illinois River
- Can grow more than 25 centimetres in their first year
- Typically weigh two to four kilograms, but can weigh up to 40 kilograms and reach more than a metre in length
- Can eat up to 20 percent of their body weight in plankton each day
- Reproduce rapidly

Impacts of Asian carps in Ontario

Asian carps prefer cool to moderate water temperatures, like those found near the shores of the Great Lakes. If Asian carps become established in Ontario waters, they could potentially eat the food supply that our native fish depend on and crowd them out of their habitat. The decline of native fish species could damage sport and commercial fishing in Ontario, which brings millions of dollars a year into the province's economy.

The term "Asian carps" includes four species: Bighead, Silver, Grass and Black Carp. Bighead Carp and Silver Carp are the species that have spread the most aggressively and can be considered one of the greatest threats to the Great Lakes.

Silver Carp are a hazard for boaters. The vibration of boat propellers can make Silver Carp jump up to three metres out of the water. Boaters and water-skiers in areas of the Mississippi and Illinois rivers have been seriously injured by jumping fish.

How to Identify

Bighead and Silver Carp represent the most severe threat to Ontario waters.

Bighead Carp:

- Typically two to four kilograms; up to 40 kilograms in weight and more than a metre in length
- Very large head and toothless mouth
- Adult fish are dark grey with dark mottling
- Eyes sit below the mouth

Silver Carp:

- Smaller than Bighead Carp
- Light silver in colour with a white belly
- Eyes sit below the mouth

Grass Carp:

- Large scales that appear crosshatched
- Eyes sit even with the mouth

Black Carp:

- Closely resembles the Grass Carp
- Weigh up to 36 kilograms (80 pounds) and exceed 1.5 metres (5 feet) in length
- Large scales with dark edges appear crosshatched
- Eyes sit even with the mouth

What You Can Do:

- Learn how to identify Asian carps and how to prevent the introduction or spread of these unwanted species.
- Never buy or keep live Asian carps. It is against the law to keep an Asian carp as a pet, use it as bait, or have a live Asian carp in your possession.
- Don't release any live fish into Ontario lakes or rivers. If you are fishing and incidentally catch an Asian carp, you must destroy it. Do not return it to the water.
- If you have any information about the illegal importing, distribution or sale of live Asian carp, report it immediately to the MNRF TIPS line at 1-877-TIPS-MNR (847-7667) toll-free anytime. You can also call Crime Stoppers anonymously at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477).

- If you've seen an Asian carp or other invasive species in the wild, please contact the toll free Invading Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711, or visit [EDDMapS Ontario website](#) to report a sighting.

Other Resources

- [Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry](#)
- [Great Lakes Fishery Commission](#)
- [Fisheries and Oceans Canada](#)
- [Invasive Species Centre](#)
- [Asian Carp Canada](#)

For More Information

Contact the Invading Species hotline at 1-800-563-7711.

Don't confuse young Asian carps with these common Ontario minnows

JUVENILE ASIAN CARPS

Juvenile Bighead carp

- Colour/Markings: Silvery, with dark mottling, especially on back
- Mouth: Up-turned
- Length: 5 to 10 centimetres
- Keel (ridge on underbelly): Prominent, extending from anal fin to pelvic fins (mid-body), no scales
- Scales: very small
- Eyes: Below line extending from tail to snout (see dotted line above)

Juvenile Silver carp

- Colour/Markings: Silvery, without dark mottling or colouration on back
- Mouth: Up-turned
- Length: 5 to 10 centimetres
- Keel (ridge on the underbelly): Prominent, extending from anal fin to gills, no scales
- Scales: Very small
- Eyes: Below line extending from tail to snout (see dotted line above)

Juvenile Grass carp

- Colour/Markings: Pale grey to gold colour, scales show prominent dark edge, giving a cross-hatched appearance
- Mouth: Terminal to slightly downturned
- Length: 5 to 10 centimetres

- Keel (ridge on the underbelly): Absent
- Scales: Intermediate to large
- Eyes: On line extending from tail to snout

COMMON MINNOWS

Fallfish

- Colour/Markings: Back is dark olive-green, black or brown, sides are silvery, belly is silvery white
- Length: 20 centimetres is common bait size
- Keel (ridge on the underbelly): Absent
- Scales: Intermediate to large with a dark crescent in front of each scale
- Eyes: On line extending from tail to snout

Emerald shiner

- Colour/Markings: Silver sides with greenish-blue back, prominent dark spot on tail
- Length: 7.5 to 10 centimetres is common bait size
- Keel (ridge on the underbelly): Absent
- Scales: Intermediate to large
- Eyes: On line extending from tail to snout

Spotted shiner

- Colour/Markings: Silvery sides with greenish-blue back, prominent dark spot on tail
- Length: 7.5 to 10 centimetres is common bait size
- Keel (ridge on the underbelly): Absent
- Scales: Intermediate to large
- Eyes: On line extending from tail to snout

Golden shiner

- Colour/Markings: Gold or brassy, deep-bodied with a lateral line running along the sides and dipping down in the middle of the body; silvery/black lateral strip in juveniles
- Length: 7.5 to 18 centimetres is common bait size
- Keel (ridge on the underbelly): Present, extending from anal fin to pelvic fins (mid-body), no scales; ridge is less distinct than alewife and Asian carps
- Scales: Intermediate to large
- Eyes: On line extending from tail to snout