

COMMON CARP

Cyprinus carpio



Many fish including walleye, pike, and sturgeon, were once considered trash fish and are now in great demand. Carp have gone the opposite route, from a desirable fish to a nuisance species.

Carp are native to Asia and some parts of Europe. Because of their tasty flesh and ease of rearing in ponds, they were introduced to England during the reign of Henry VIII. Although earlier attempts failed, carp were successfully stocked in the United States in 1877.

Early stockings in Manitoba took place at Springfield, Portage la Prairie, and Minnedosa in 1885 and again in 1889 at Rapid City and Glenboro. Those stockings proved successful; carp were discovered in 1939 in the Red River at Lockport. Since then they have spread to many areas of southern Manitoba; principally the drainages of the Red and Assiniboine rivers and lakes Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Winnipegosis. Adaptable as carp are, their populations are impacted by loss of marshes and barriers to migration.

Carp spawn in spring, in shallow marshy waters that have warmed to at least 17°C. Females along with several males can often be seen thrashing about in the shallow water with their dorsal fins and part of their backs above the surface. The eggs are deposited randomly and adhere to the vegetation to incubate for several days.

Carp can be identified by their large scales, heavy deep body, long dorsal fin with a single strong spiny ray, and single barbels at each corner of the mouth. Their diet consists of both animal and vegetable matter, which they select out of the mud bottom. Occasionally carp will feed on surface insects and have been caught on dry flies.

warm water species