

# Asian Carp

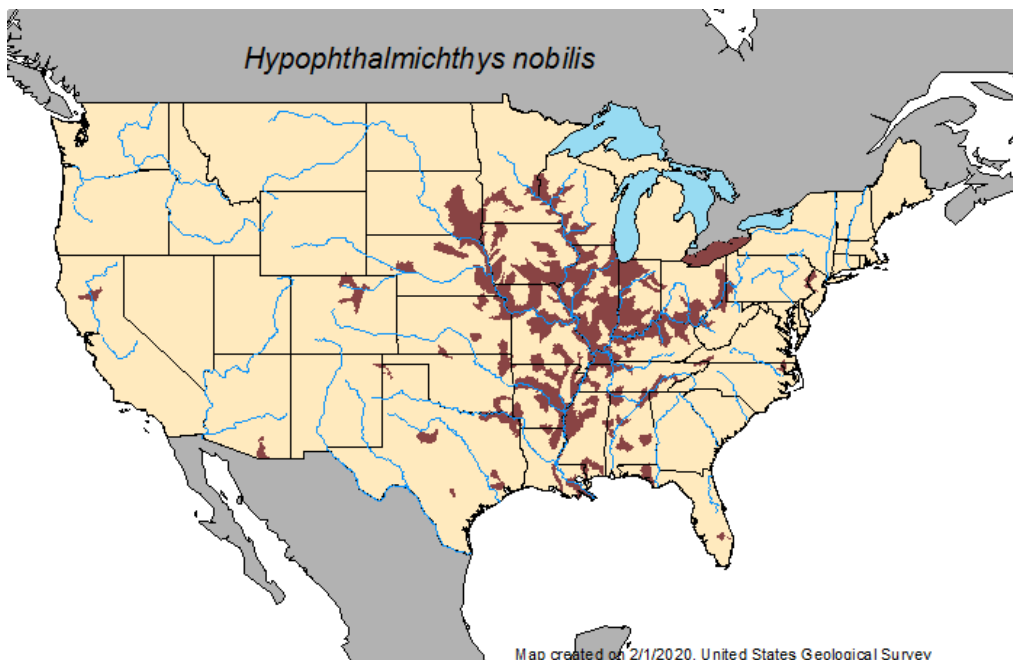


There are 4 species of Asian Carp (Bighead, Black, Grass, Silver). Like other carp species, they are not native to the U.S. but have been introduced in several states, primarily for the control of nuisance plants and as a new food source for humans. In Georgia, grass carp are currently the only Asian carp species known to occur.

## Bighead Carp

### General Overview:

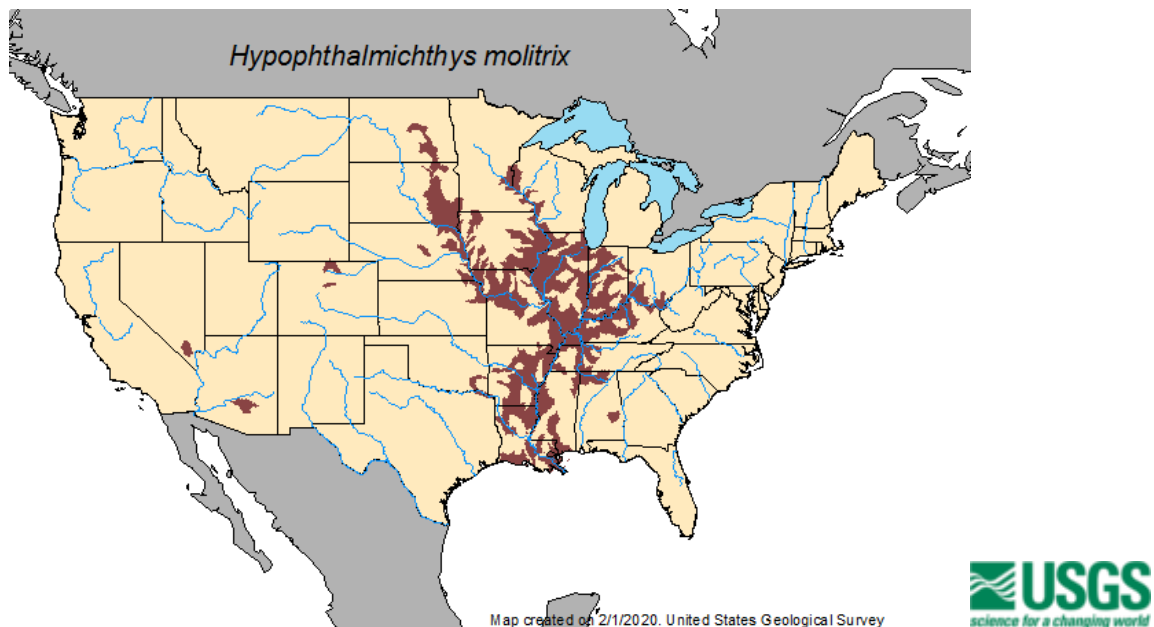
*Large carp species that consumes significant amounts of zooplankton and can reach 100lbs. Their consumption of zooplankton takes food away from several native sport fish (e.g. bluegill, largemouth bass, crappie, etc.), thus negatively impacting these native species.*



## Silver Carp

### **General Overview:**

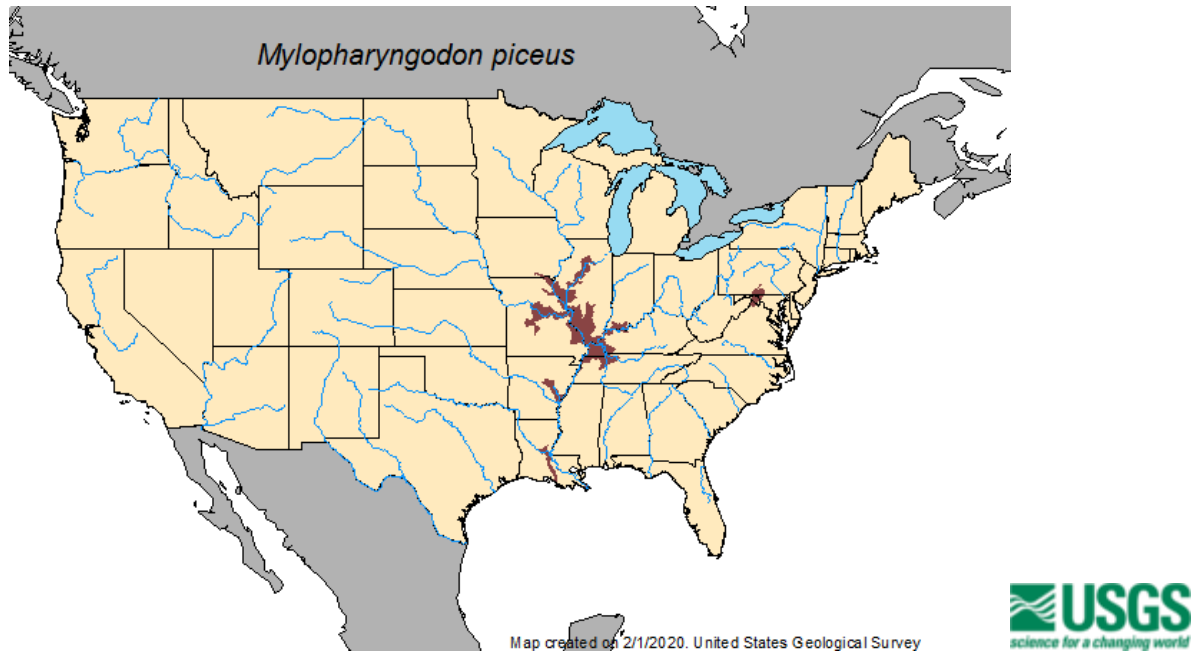
*Large carp species that consumes significant amounts of zooplankton and can reach 60lbs. Like Bighead carp, their consumption of zooplankton takes food away from several native sport fish, thus negatively impacting these native species. Additionally, silver carp are known to leap upwards of 10ft out of the water when startled, thus creating a serious risk to boaters.*



## Black Carp

### **General Overview:**

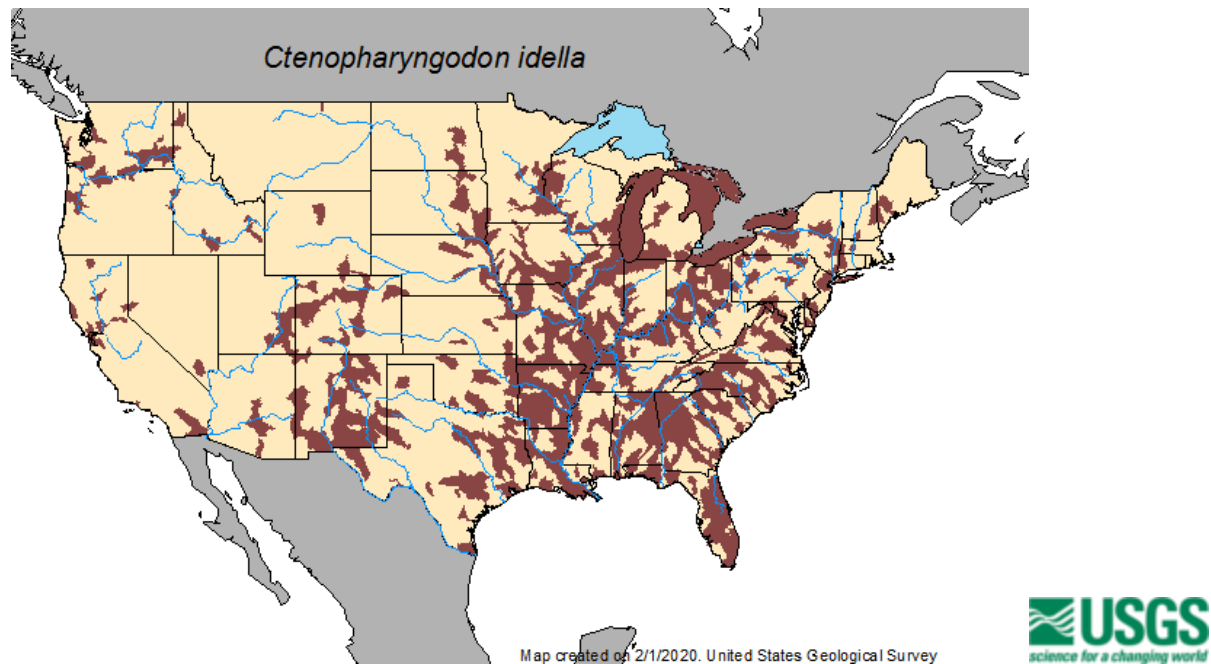
*The least common of the Asian carp species, it can grow upwards of 70lbs and primarily eats mollusks (e.g. snails, mussels, etc.) As such, it can pose a significant risk to native mollusk populations.*



## Grass Carp

### General Overview:

*The most common of the Asian carp species, it can reach 80lbs by consuming large quantities of aquatic vegetation. Such herbivorous habits are the reason it has been imported into the U.S. in recent decades to control nuisance aquatic plants. However, it's consumption of aquatic plants can pose problems for native sportfish using those plants for shelter/food. Furthermore, it was widely believed that only reproductively sterile grass carp were being released into U.S. waters, but scientists testing samples of wild grass carp have discovered many specimens which weren't sterile, thus creating the likelihood that these fish can and do reproduce.*

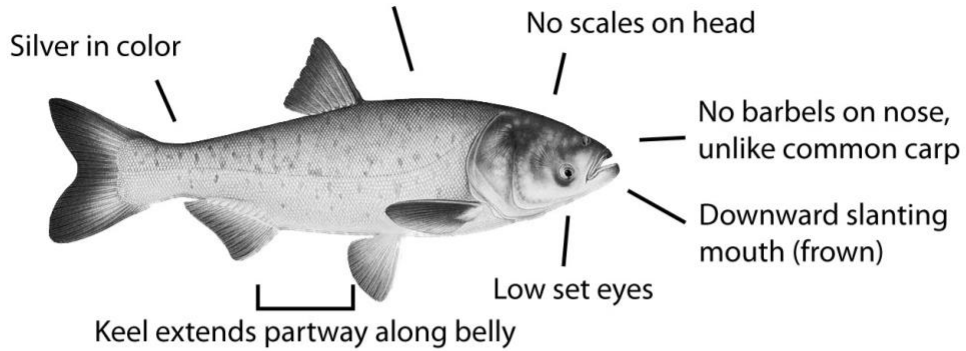


## Asian Carp Identification

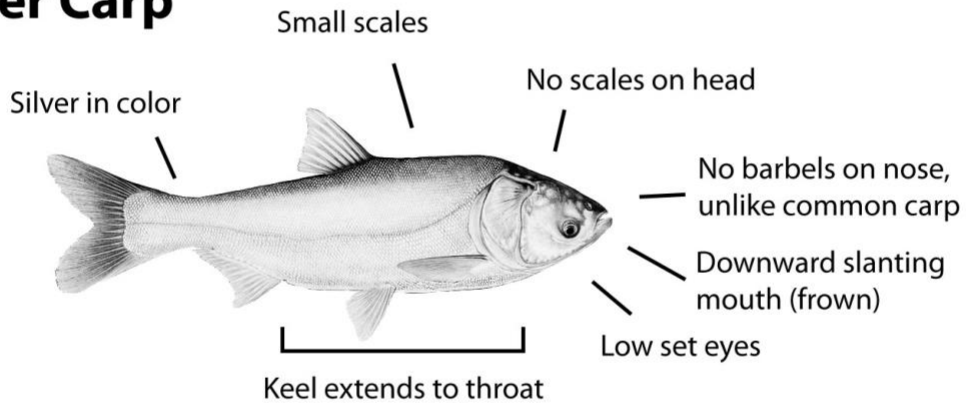
Several species of carp have been introduced into the U.S., including the Southeast. In Georgia, the common carp is very common and should not be confused with the various species of Asian carp, as the common carp has barbels on its nose whereas the Bighead and Silver carp do not. The guides below can help further distinguish the species. Should you have questions regarding identification of a fish you have harvested, or if you suspect you have captured an Asian carp, **RETAIN THE FISH** and **IMMEDIATELY [contact your regional Georgia DNR Wildlife Resources Division Fisheries Office.](#)**

## Bighead Carp

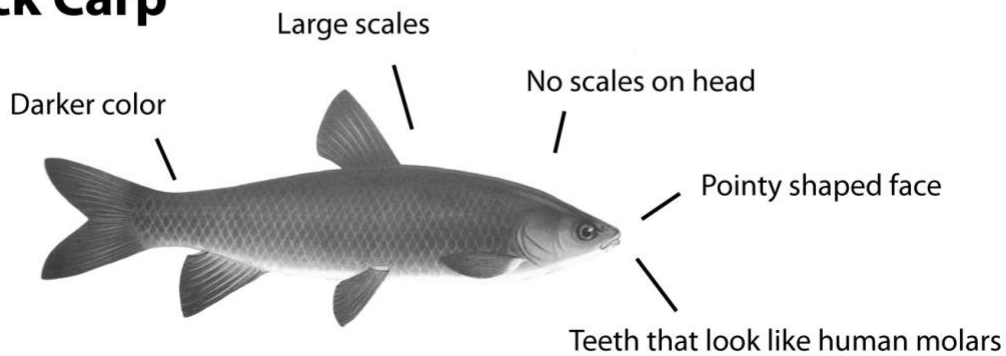
Dark blotches along the back (dorsal) region



## Silver Carp



## Black Carp







## Black and Grass Carp Identification

(Included in 2017 Asian Carp Monitoring and Response Plan Appendices)

Black and grass carp are very similar in appearance. We do not have a reliable method to tell them apart based on external characteristics, but these photos and general characteristics might help. When in doubt, report the fish to the appropriate resource management agency.

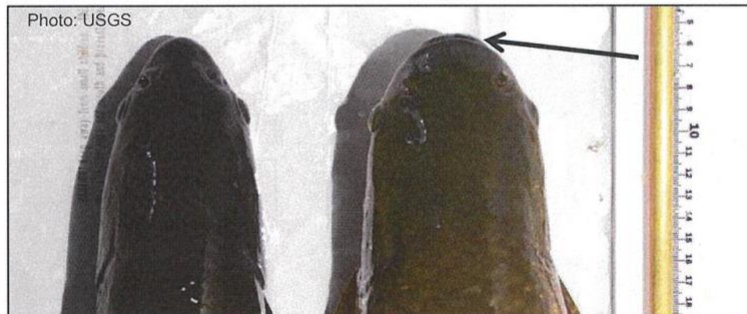
**Black carp**



**Grass Carp**



The mouth of **adult** black carp is more subterminal and the operculum is longer than in grass carp. The black carp's head is generally narrower, more cone-shaped, whereas the grass carp's tends to be rounder, blunter. However, the difference can be subtle.



The upper lip of a grass carp is visible from above but that of a black carp is generally not **when the mouth is fully closed**. Young black carp may also exhibit this feature, so it is only useful for **adults**.



If the carcass is in good condition, you might be able to use the angle of the lateral line to ID the fish. "The lateral line of a black carp remains relatively straight moving from the operculum posterior, with a slight dip around the dorsal fin. On grass carp the lateral line takes an initial ventral dip for the first 6-8 scales (about 10°)" (Patrick Kroboth, USGS).

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## **So, What Harm do Asian Carp Cause?**

Though Asian carp have been a popular fish for food consumption and to control a variety of nuisance aquatic vegetation, they typically create more problems than they solve. Depending on the species, Asian carp can grow close to 100lbs, and the volume of zooplankton, vegetation, and other foods they eat to achieve such large sizes can be quite significant. Their consumption of these resources depletes those available for other native fish and fauna, thus negatively impacting those species and potentially causing native fish growth rates and populations to suffer.

While ecological concerns certainly abound with Asian carp, perhaps the greatest and most immediate concern is for human safety. One species of Asian carp, silver carp, are known to jump upwards of 10ft when disturbed by boats. While a single jumping fish may not seem like a major threat, the sheer size of adult silver carp, along with their tendency to travel in schools, can create significant hazards to passengers in moving vessels should they encounter jumping fish.

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## **Current Management for Asian Carp**

Currently, Asian carp (outside of grass carp) have not been located in Georgia, and thus no active management is occurring. GA DNR staff continue to take a proactive stance of educating the public to the best of our ability as to the negative implications of introducing Asian carp. Our goal in doing so is to thwart or minimize man-induced introductions, particularly with how close established populations are in adjacent states. Man-induced introductions can be deliberate (i.e. intentionally moving a fish from one area to another with hopes to establish a population) or by accident (i.e. use of fish as bait, which may escape and become established). Regardless of their introduction method, the occurrence of Asian carp populations in adjacent and distant states do present Asian carp as not just a regional problem but truly a national problem. As such, Georgia will continue to be involved where practical in the national efforts to prevent the introduction of these species and conduct control/eradication measures should they arrive in Georgia.

As previously stated, the only Asian carp currently known to be present in Georgia are grass carp. Their introduction into the state began decades ago with their use in private ponds for aquatic weed control. However, since that time many of these fish, which were all believed to be sterile, have escaped or been removed from private ponds and relocated to public waterbodies, including rivers and creeks. Data collected by fishery scientists have found that not all grass carp are sterile.

**CONSEQUENTLY, ANGLERS WHO CAPTURE GRASS CARP IN PUBLIC RIVERS OR**

**CREEKS ARE ENCOURAGED TO KILL THEM AND DO NOT RETURN THEM TO THE WATER.** Grass carp in these open-water systems can potentially cause long-term negative impacts in these waters, including through possible reproduction, and thus they should be removed when encountered.