

Bighead and Silver Carp WATCH

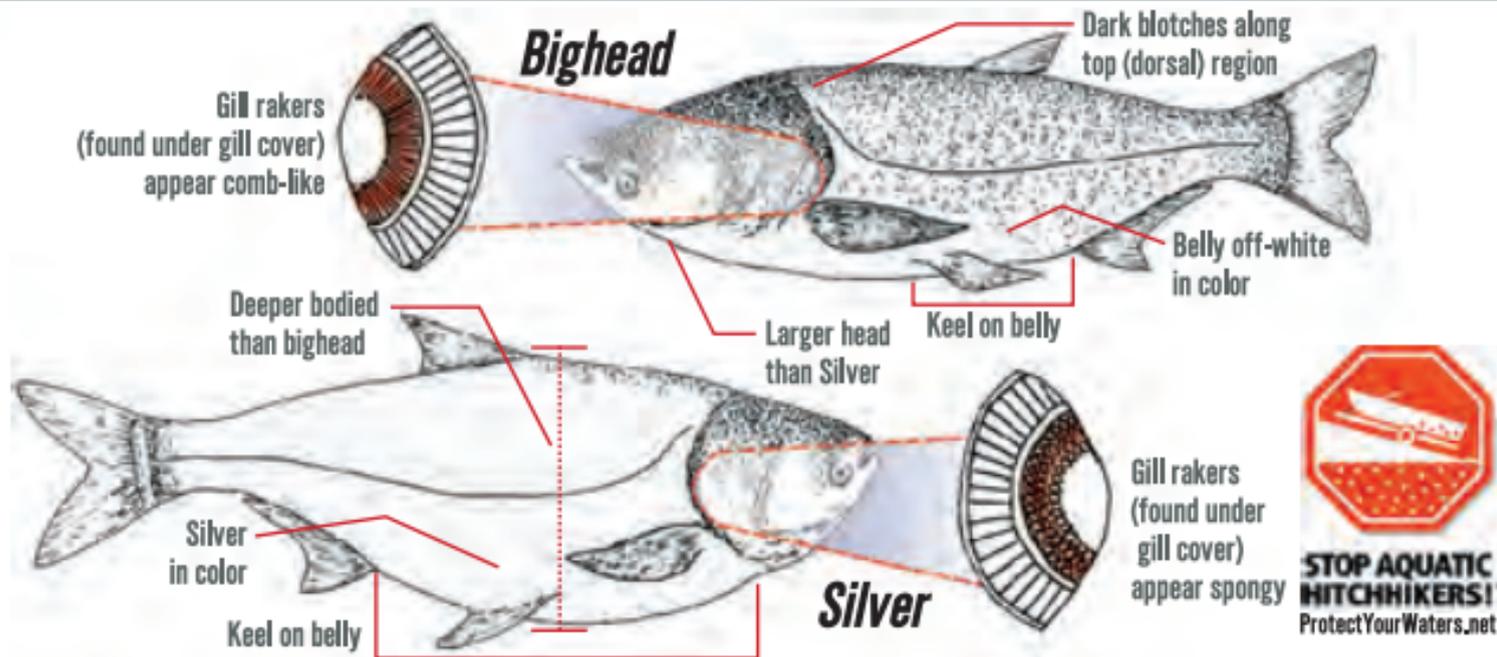
Bighead



Silver



How To Identify Bighead and Silver Carp (adults shown)



General Characteristics

- Low-set eye; adults may weigh more than 60 pounds
- Scaleless head and large upturned mouth
- Juveniles difficult to distinguish from local baitfish species
- Will jump out of water when disturbed by boat motors

Photos: David Riecks,
ITCS/University of Illinois

Illustrations: Martha Kneuer, LMBS/
Illinois Natural History
Survey

Bighead and Silver Carp

Bighead (*Hypophthalmichthys nobilis*) and silver carp (*H. molitrix*) are invasive fish spreading to lakes and rivers, particularly the Mississippi River and Great Lakes regions. They feed on plankton and compete for food with native mussels, larval fishes, and some adult fishes. They quickly dominate fisheries, impacting recreation and commercial fishing. Silver carp and hybrids can leap up to 10 feet out of the water when disturbed by watercraft, injuring people working or recreating on the water.

Both carp were brought to North America from Asia in the early 1970s. By the early 1980s, they escaped to the Mississippi River and many tributaries. Wild bait harvest and release of live bait can contribute to the spread of these fish to new waters, since their juveniles look similar to native baitfish. Early detection of isolated populations may help slow or restrict the spread of these carp. Your help in reporting new sightings and preventing the spread of these and other non-native aquatic species is vital for protecting our waters.

How you can help

- **Do not harvest bait** from waters infested with bighead and silver carp.
- **Dispose of unwanted live bait** in the trash.
- **Never release fish** from one body of water into another.
- **Report** sightings to Indiana Div of Fish and Wildlife (317) 234-3883 or IL-IN Sea Grant (847) 872-8677, except if caught in the following rivers: Ohio, Wabash, W Fork White (below Martinsville), and E Fork White (below Williams Dam). Note exact location of the catch. Specimens should be frozen or quality close-up photos taken to allow for identity verification.

Reminder: Know the rules!

Specimens or photos are needed to confirm sightings, but some jurisdictions prohibit possession of live bighead and silver carp. It is legal to transport dead specimens to your natural resource agency to report new sightings. Contact your local natural resource management agency for additional instructions and information about regulations. Unauthorized introduction of aquatic plants, fish, crayfish or other animals into the wild is illegal. Protect your property and our waters.