

For more information on carp and carp fishing, visit these sections of our website:

Bait recipes:

[www.tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/fish/didyouknow/inland/carp\\_baits.phtml](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/fish/didyouknow/inland/carp_baits.phtml)

How to cook a carp:

[www.tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/fish/didyouknow/inland/carp\\_recipes.phtml](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/fish/didyouknow/inland/carp_recipes.phtml)

Fishing regulations:

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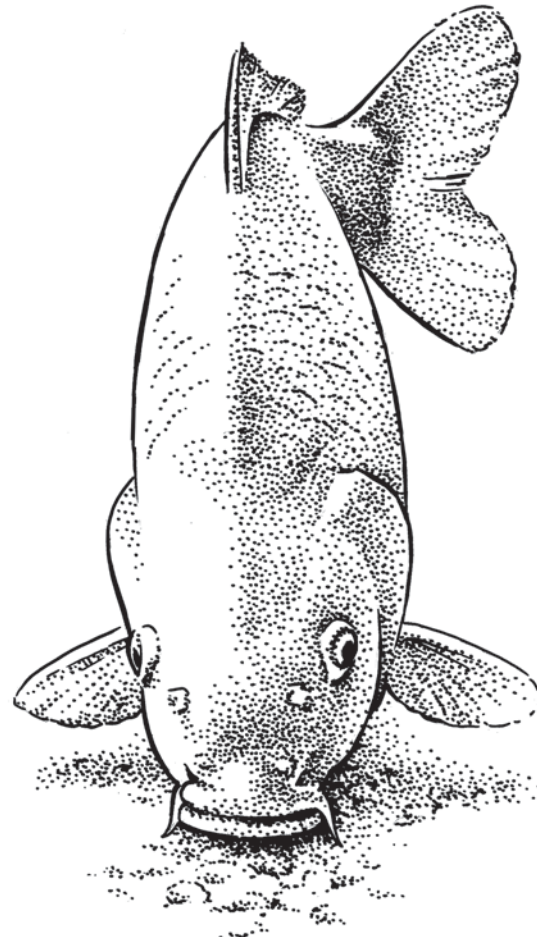
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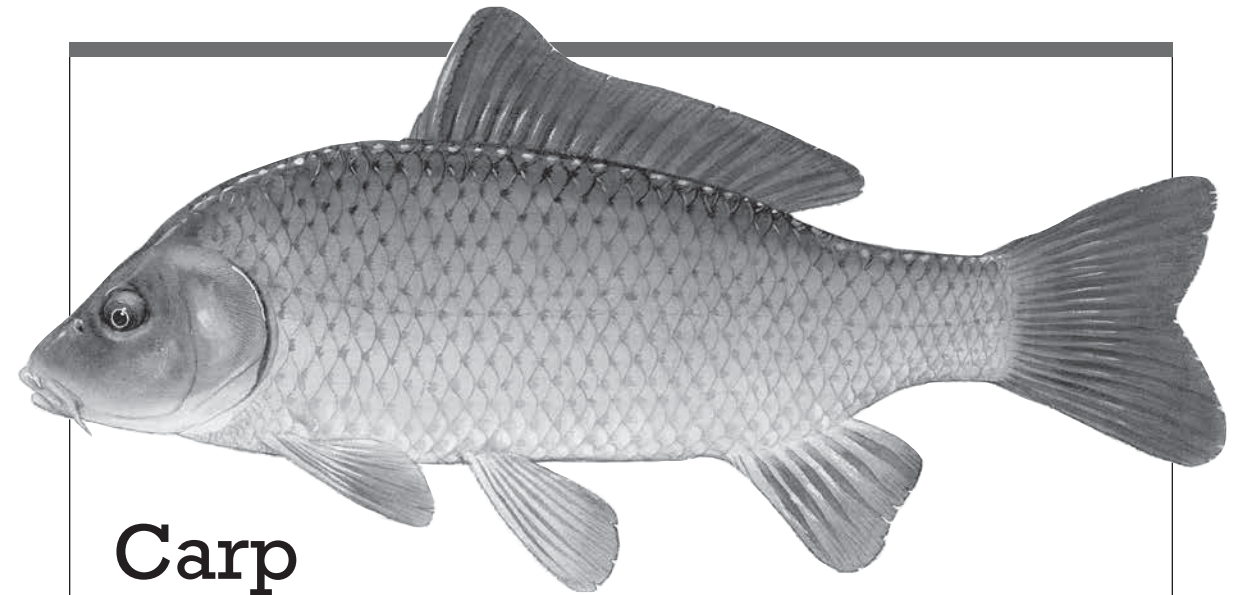
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# CARP FISHING

## in Texas



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## Carp Fishing in Texas

By Mukhtar Farooqi

**T**he common carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) is found in lakes and streams all over Texas. Although not a native species, it is well adapted to Texas waters and is gaining popularity as a sport fish. Carp grow big, are easy to catch, fight very hard, and you don't need a boat to fish for them.

The carp was introduced to the United States in 1877 with the approval of the federal government, which saw it as a cheap food source for a growing population. Carp came to Texas in 1881.

The state's first fish hatchery was a carp production facility at Barton Springs in Austin.

Carp fishing and carp tournaments are getting attention in Texas. Lady Bird Lake (formerly Town Lake), located on the Colorado River in the heart of the capital city, is gaining a reputation as a world-class trophy carp fishery. The lake is home to the annual Austin Team Championship, which attracts anglers from several states and a few other countries. Lady Bird Lake was also the site of the 2006 Texas Carp Challenge, which caused quite a stir when one angler caught a 43.13-pound carp and won \$250,000 for setting a new state record.

Can carp fishing become as popular in the United States as it is in many European countries? Only time will tell.

## BIOLOGY

The common carp is a large member of the minnow family. Carp can be distinguished from goldfish and others of similar appearance by a pair of barbels on each side of the mouth. Color typically ranges from brassy green or yellow to golden brown or silvery. The belly is usually yellowish-white. Variations are not uncommon: During the carp's long history as a cultured fish, many commercial varieties have been developed, and some of these fish have found their way into wild populations. Mirror carp, Israeli carp and koi carp are all the same species.

Carp can tolerate a variety of environmental conditions, which explains why they have been so successful in populating freshwater habitats in rural and urban settings. They can cope with turbid water (they find food by smell and taste rather than by sight, and produce slime to protect their gills), low dissolved oxygen (down to three parts per million), and temperature extremes (34°F to 106°F) that would be unfavorable to many other fish.

Carp are omnivores, consuming invertebrates, plants, seeds and other forms of organic matter. They can feed at any depth but prefer the bottom. Typical feeding behavior involves sucking in and blowing out material while sifting for food. Spawning occurs in shallow water from March to September, when water temperatures are 48°F to 90°F. Carp can live longer than 40 years.

## FISHING TECHNIQUES

Traditional American tackle and fishing techniques are adequate for carp up to about 15 pounds. To catch carp consistently in the 20-to-40-pound range, anglers often use specialized gear, commonly referred to as "Euro-style" tackle. A typical setup consists of three rods mounted on a rod holder fitted with bite alarms. Beginners may want to start with a 7-foot medium-action rod, spinning reel with 15-pound test-line, a sliding sinker (1/4 or 1/2 ounce), hook sizes from four to eight, and a rod holder.

To attract carp, chum or bait a spot using corn, maize, range cubes, rotten potatoes or "boilies" (a mixture of ingredients rolled into

balls and boiled to harden). Boilies can be bought commercially or made at home.

Baiting a hook with sweet corn, flavored dough balls, or worms can yield decent results. More adventurous anglers can try boilies or corn in conjunction with a hair rig, which requires the bait to be threaded on a hanging piece of line while leaving the hook bare. This is one of the more successful presentations used by trophy carp anglers. It makes use of the carp's natural feeding habit: A fish sucks in the bait and blows out, causing the dangling hook to lodge in the lower lip.

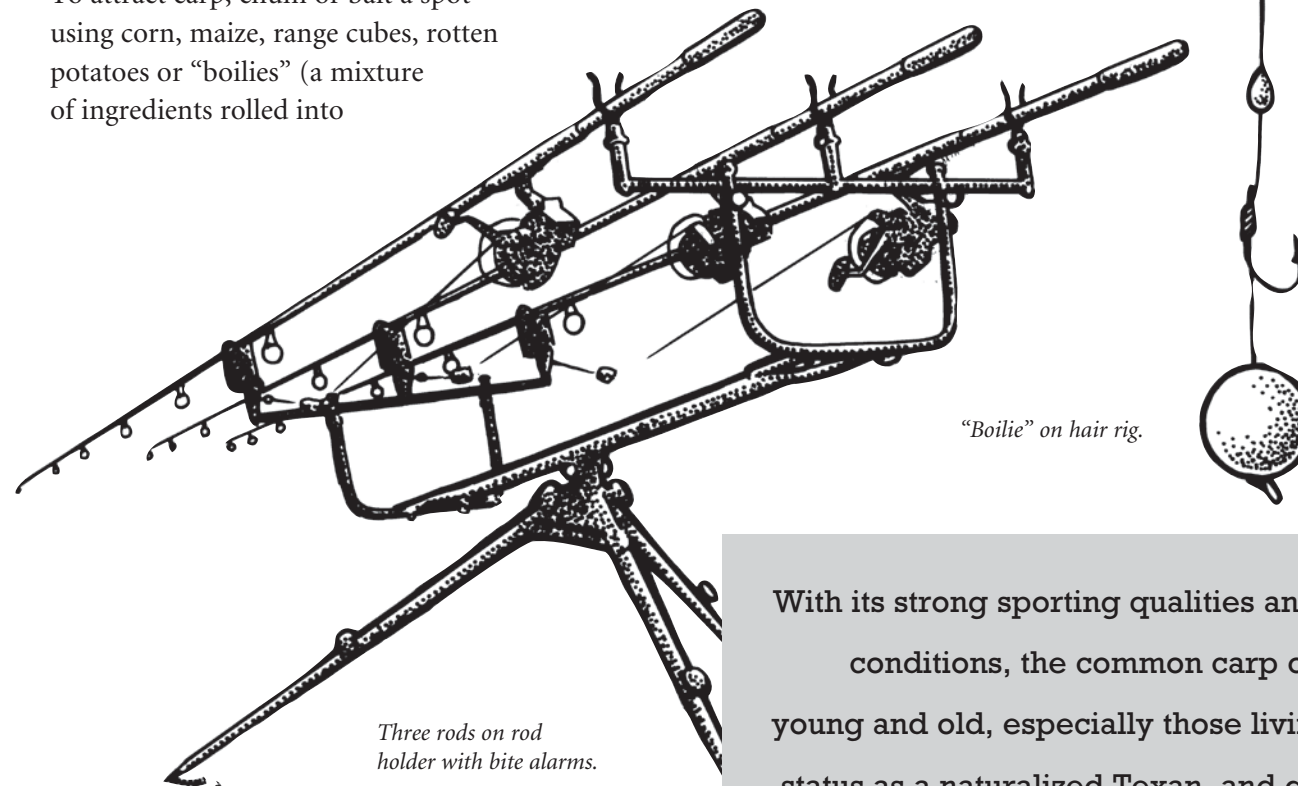
Whatever setup you use, make sure your drag is set low; otherwise you'll risk having your rod pulled into the water by a feisty carp. When you feel a steady pull, set the hook, readjust the drag, and get ready to do battle with one of the toughest fighters in fresh water.

Carp may also be taken by bow fishing, trotline, and other methods that are legal for nongame fish in Texas.

## IF YOU CATCH A CARP

Once caught, large carp may be handled with care, photographed, and then released. However, carp under 10 pounds can be good eating if prepared properly. Deep-fat frying, baking, smoking, pressure-cooking, chowdering, and pickling are methods that can be used to prepare carp for the table.

There are no bag or size limits on common carp, except at Lady Bird Lake in Travis County where an angler may keep only one carp per day that measures 33 inches or longer. There is no limit on smaller carp at Lady Bird Lake.



Three rods on rod holder with bite alarms.

"Boilie" on hair rig.

With its strong sporting qualities and ability to thrive in a wide range of water conditions, the common carp offers bank-fishing opportunities to Texans young and old, especially those living in urban areas. The carp has earned its status as a naturalized Texan, and gives every indication that it's here to stay.