

CARP (*Cyprinus carpio*, Linnaeus, 1758)

Black Sea and Adriatic Basin

Native species

E – Endangered species

The carp grows from 25 to 75 cm, with a maximum length of 120 cm. The wild carp has a spindle-shaped, slightly laterally compressed body. Domesticated carp appear in numerous breeds — from completely scaleless varieties through intermediate forms to those fully covered with scales. The body of cultivated carp is generally higher and rounder than that of the wild form. It has a large, terminal mouth with four barbels and fleshy lips. The dorsal fin is very long and the anal fin is high. The body colour adapts to the environment. The back is darker, bluish-green, the sides are yellowish to greenish, the belly is white to yellow. Along the lateral line, darker spots may appear.

The carp lives in calmer and deeper standing or slow-flowing waters with soft, vegetated bottoms. During winter, it lies dormant in the muddy bottom. Wild carp can migrate long distances along rivers.

Males reach sexual maturity at 3 to 6 years, females at 4 to 6 years. Spawning takes place from May to June. Sexually mature individuals migrate into river branches and flooded areas for spawning. The female lays 300,000 to 750,000 small, adhesive eggs on aquatic vegetation. The carp is mainly herbivorous, feeding on plant matter but also small invertebrates.

Originally, the species inhabited Asia, from the Amur River to Yunnan, extending to the Black, Caspian, Azov and Aral Seas. In the past, it spread throughout the Danube river basin and today it inhabits all of Europe. In Slovenia, the wild carp lives in the middle reaches of the Sava, Mura and Drava rivers and rarely in their larger tributaries. The cultivated form can be found in almost every standing or flowing body of water.

The wild form of the carp is one of the most endangered fish species in Europe. The main reason for its decline is river regulation, which has destroyed spawning grounds. The usual conservation measure of stocking with cultivated carp is more harmful than beneficial from an ecological perspective. The wild carp is, and will continue to be, highly endangered.

It is protected by fishing size limits, closed seasons and catch regulations. Effective conservation of wild carp can only be achieved by establishing protected reserves and increasing the minimum legal catch size to at least 45 cm, since females are only fully mature at that size.

Carp – *Cyprinus carpio* (Linnaeus, 1758)

River basins in Slovenia: Adriatic, Danube

Spawning season: May to June

Number of eggs: 300,000 to 750,000

Sexual maturity: 3 to 6 years

Size: 25–75 cm (max. 120 cm)

Red List of Slovenia: E – Endangered (wild form)

Species status: Native (Danube), Introduced (Adriatic)

Migration mode: Long distance migrations (Potamodromous)

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