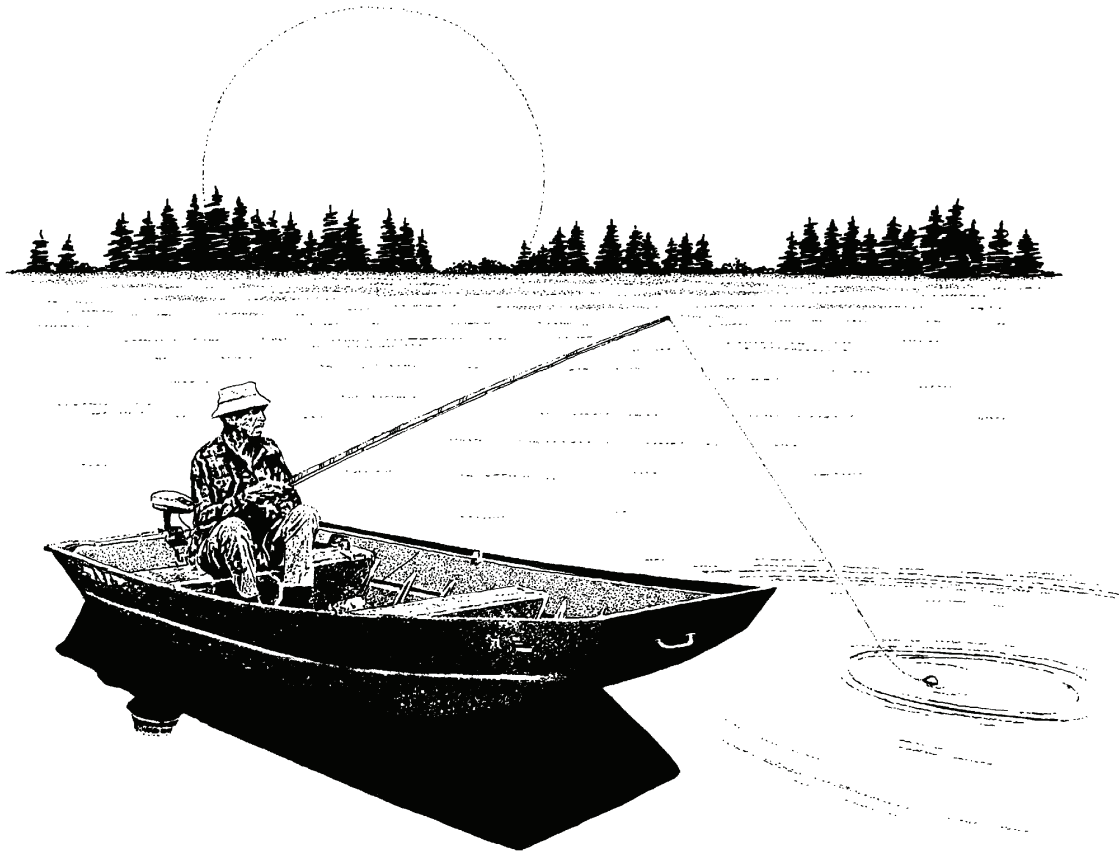


# Carp Fishing In Washington



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## **Background**

According to Ben Hur Lampman in *Coming of the Pond Fishes* (published in 1946, and the basis for most historical information in this document), the earliest introduction of exotic fish in the Northwest was in 1880. In that year, a Troutdale, Oregon sea captain received from California a shipment of 35 “genuine German carp and perfect beauties.” These fish soon spawned in their Troutdale pond, and before the year was out the Captain estimated his increase at 7,000 carp. In late May of 1881, Mother Nature played a cruel trick. An unusually high spring freshet invaded the carp nursery, and several thousand “perfect beauties” escaped into the Columbia River. Within 12 years, the Oregonian newspaper reported that commercial fishermen were offering to supply carp as fertilizer in any quantity to farmers, for \$5 a ton.

## **Fishing For Carp**

In Washington, a fishing license is not required to fish for carp. There is also no daily limit. However, please be responsible and harvest only what you will use. Fishing for carp is normally done in two ways, the traditional angling methods using hook and line and with bow and arrow (bow-fishing).

## **Hook and Line**

Your individual preference will dictate what kind of reel you will use, openfaced spinning, spin-casting, or baitcasting. However, most ardent carp anglers select an openfaced spinning reel because it offers the least amount of resistance when carp take the bait. Carp will normally pass up any bait that offers any resistance when eaten. Whatever reel is selected, it should be capable of holding 100-150 yards of 12 lb. test monofilament line, have a good drag system, and the capability of rapid line recovery. Line strength depends upon water conditions, potential obstacles, size of fish, and angler expectations. Although not crucial, monofilament in either clear or green is preferable to the braided, copolymer, or any of the highly visible lines.

The size and style of hook used for carp fishing influences the number and size of fish caught. There is some indication that treble hooks outfish single hooks in lakes. When dough baits are used, a treble hooks will hold the bait longer than single hooks and require less baiting. Smaller hooks (6, 8, 10, or 12) will catch smaller fish. A greater number of larger carp will be caught if the hooks are kept baited. The best style of hook is a size 6 or 8 shortshanked with straight eye. Treble hooks in sizes 8-12 work best and can be used with a variety of baits. The hook should be tied directly to the line. Sinkers should only be used if the weight of the bait is insufficient maintain its position on the bottom or if needed to cast further out. Either an egg or slip sinker should be used with a some type of stop to prevent the sinker from touching the bait. It is important that the

fish not feel any resistance when the bait is swallowed. Always use the least amount of weight possible. The use of bobbers is not recommended because offer too much resistance when the fish takes the bait. A variety of baits can be used to fish for carp, but the most common are doughballs, corn, and worms.

Carp fishing in lakes should be done with a slack line. Cast the bait out and allow it to sink to the bottom. Then drag the bait a short distance to take the bend out of the line and after getting the rod in position, strip 3-4 feet of slack line off of the reel.

In streams, the current will take the slack out of the line, thus the line must be kept tight. The hook should be set immediately in warm water, on a firm bite or line movement. In cold water, the hook should be set when line movement is noticed. If snags or thick vegetation is a problem, a longer rod will allow you to drop the bait in a more vertical fashion. Greater casting distance can also be achieved with longer rods (up to 10 to 11 feet in length). They also allow for a quick line pickup, which provides a more forceful hook set. Many veteran carp anglers also employ some type of bite indicator. They range from simply draping a piece of paper over the line to elaborate electrical devices.

In cool weather, good carp fishing may be found throughout the day. However, in warmer weather, especially during the heat of summer, early morning and evening are the better times to fish.

In general, carp may be found any place in a river where you would expect to catch fish. Deep holes and driftwood piles are good producers of fish. In lakes, select a fishing site in the shallower areas and areas that are free of shoreline snags and/or heavy aquatic vegetation. Some vegetation may be desirable.

### **Fly Fishing**

Another hook and line method that is gaining popularity in carp fishing is fly fishing. There are two ways to fly fish for carp: sight casting and blind casting. Sight casting has its origins from the flats of the tropics. The techniques used are similar to those used for fishing for bonefish and on occasion, carp will take a fly from the surface. Although carp can be caught throughout the year, the spring is the best time because they congregate in the shallows in large schools to spawn. They are also a little less wary, however, you will still want to be as stealthy as possible. Once a carp is located (look for carp tailing, look for wakes in the water, or look for areas of disturbance) you will want to determine what direction the fish is travelling and cast the fly within a few feet in front of the fish. You will want to make as delicate a cast as possible to avoid spooking the fish. Let the fly sit motionless for a few seconds and then give it either tiny twitches or begin retrieving it with short slow strips. The method of blind casting to the fish is just that. You can cast to an area that appears to contain fish and you hope you're correct.

Fly rods in the 7- to 9-weight range are preferred because it has the extra backbone to turn these fish. Use a weight forward or double taper floating line. The reel should have a good drag system as well as having the capacity to hold at least 75 yards of 20 lb. backing. Leaders should be about 6-10 feet in length tippets should be from 8-12 lbs. The best chance of catching a carp on the fly would be from choosing a fly that imitates a

food that the carp recognizes. There are three broad areas of food categories: 1) aquatic organisms, which include invertebrates (insects, worms, leeches, scuds, and crayfish) and vertebrates (small baitfish), 2) plant material (seeds of cottonwood and mulberries), and 3) introduced food (corn and bread). Flies can be impressionistic or realistic, but the choice would be to go with realistic looking flies and in sizes 6-10. Some fly patterns worth considering are: damsel fly nymph, wooley bugger, leech, San Juan worm, and crayfish.

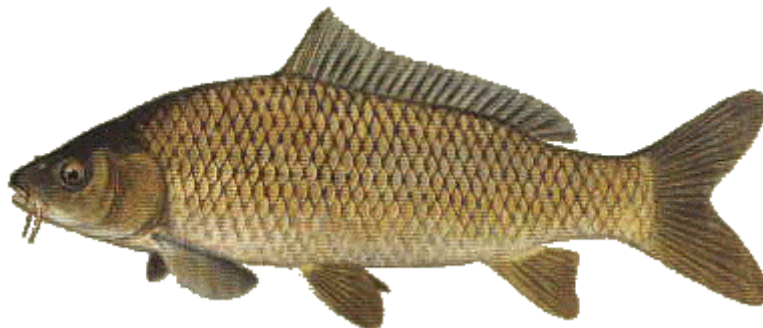
### **Bow-fishing**

Bow-fishing can provide a great deal of challenge, action, and excitement. The bow should have a draw strength of at least 30 lbs. The bow will probably get covered in blood and mud, and occasionally submerged in water. So do not get anything too fancy. Reels come in all shapes and sizes. They can be highly technical and expensive, or be as simple as a 1 pound coffee can secured to a narrow board. The close-faced spinning reel works fine, but you have a restriction on the line weight. Retriever reels are preferred because you can put very heavy line on them (200-400 lbs.). Fishing arrows work the best because the weight gives the best penetration. Arrow heads are a matter of preference. An arrow head with a reversible barb helps in taking the fish off.

As with fly fishing, bow-fishing requires stealth. The easiest time to bow-fish for carp is during the spring when the fish are spawning, less wary, and in the shallows. Carefully approach the carp by boat or wading. Be very careful to keep the line clear of your wristwatch, clothing, buttons, and bow projections.

### **Distinguishing Common Carp from Grass Carp**

The common carp can be easily identified by several features. A few of these features are: large scales, two barbels on each side of the mouth, and the first dorsal and anal fin spines are serrated. Most carp are bronze-gold to golden yellow on the sides and yellowish white on the belly. Partly scaled or scaleless individuals are frequently caught by fishermen: these are known as "half-scaled," "mirror" or "leather" carp.



**Figure 1.** Common carp (*Cyprinus carpio*)

Although the grass carp resembles the common carp because of its large size and scales, it can easily be differentiated from the common carp. Grass carp do not have a sucker-like mouth as do common carp. Grass carp do not have barbells on their mouth. The dorsal fin of grass carp is smaller than that of common carp. Furthermore, grass carp are usually silvery-white, rather than the brownish-yellow of the common carp.



**Figure 2.** Grass carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*)

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