



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**.

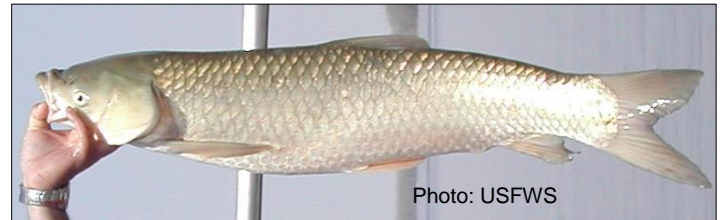


If the carcass is in good condition, you might be able to use the angle of the lateral line to ID the fish. "The lateral line of a black carp remains relatively straight moving from the operculum posterior, with a slight dip around the dorsal fin. On grass carp the lateral line takes an initial ventral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

Black carp



Grass Carp



Black carp tend to have longer pectoral fins than grass carp. The coloration of black carp is described as, "Black, blue gray, or dark brown and the fins in particular are darkly pigmented. In contrast, coloration of grass carp is often described as olivaceous or silvery white, or as olive-brown above and silvery below, and most fins are dusky. Nevertheless, color may not always be reliable" (Nico et al. 2005).