



The original aquatic INVADER

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By now, many South Dakota anglers are familiar with the aerial show put on by silver carp, or the filtering abilities of zebra mussels making their way into uncharted waters.

Over time, humans have increased their ability to move plants and animals around the planet. The outcome of some of these relocations has been extremely beneficial. For example, the South Dakota state bird, the pheasant, originally came from Asia.

Although the pheasant has been beneficial to South Dakota, one of the first fish species introduced has a much different story. The common carp was initially brought to the United States sometime in the mid 1800s from Eurasia.



The first documented common carp were imported from Germany by J.A. Poppe into his ponds in Sonoma Valley, California. Offspring were sold to pond owners in adjacent areas to be raised as food fish.

In their native range, common carp are considered one of the top sport fish, similar to walleye in South Dakota. For this reason, those who settled in North America desired the ability to fish for and consume carp again.

In 1877, the U.S. Fish Commission imported common carp from Germany and over the next two decades stocked them throughout the country. This is how the first common carp made their way into South Dakota. A California Fish Commission report from this era said common carp were expected to "...be a very excellent substitute for the worthless and unpalatable fish of the warm waters of the great valleys in the interior of the state."

Newcomers to this country must have had a change in taste. Over time, common carp plummeted down to the bottom of the list of desired fish. Today, fish such as walleye, bluegill, yellow perch, trout and catfish are edible favorites among anglers.

While common carp are known to destroy aquatic vegetation, increase cloudiness of waters and degrade habitat overall throughout the United States, they are virtually impossible to get rid of from most waters.

How can we make the best of this unwanted species in South Dakota? Go fish for them! If you like catching big fish with little competition from other anglers, carp fishing can be a blast.

There are even a small number of anglers in South Dakota who target common carp on a fly rod. In the right situation, it can be a lot like sight fishing for bone fish on the flats near the coasts. So grab a bag of frozen corn or tie a few carp flies and make the best of South Dakota's original aquatic invader. ❁