

Carp Anglers Group 4th Annual D.C. Fish-In

By Angel Bolinger



A few weeks ago, Marty suggested I check out the 4th Annual D.C. Fish-In sponsored by the Carp Anglers Group (CAG). He said to me, "you'll love it. These guys have \$500 rods, specialized equipment with alarms, they come from all over." So, I gave Marty this look of disbelief about the dollar figures and say, "ok, sure I'll go." Meanwhile, I'm thinking to myself, this sounds unbelievable. Once again, Marty was right, I had a ball!

The



Fish-In was held last Saturday and Sunday (May 6-7) at the Tidal Basin. I got there Sunday morning, and I see a bunch of guys laying around on lawn chairs with three rods each, which are propped up on a special stand. After surveying the situation, I walked up to a guy, who I later learned is Phil Saunders, and asked him "so, how does this all work?" Phil looked up from his carp magazine and immediately starts explaining things. He even reeled in a line to show me the difference in rig setups and bait. About 10 minutes later, Phil caught a carp on that rod, which weighed 37-pounds, the biggest of the Fish-In. The average size carp during this Fish-In was about 12-13 pounds with a few in the 20's.

What a great group of Anglers! Phil Saunders (Annandale, VA), Nigil Griffin (Milford, CT), Bob Bernowski (Buckeye Lake, OH), Dave Dicks (Richmond, VA), and Pat Kerwin (Washington, D.C.) were extremely helpful in explaining and providing carp fishing information. Numerous tourists asked CAG members:

"What is that?"

"What are you fishing for?"

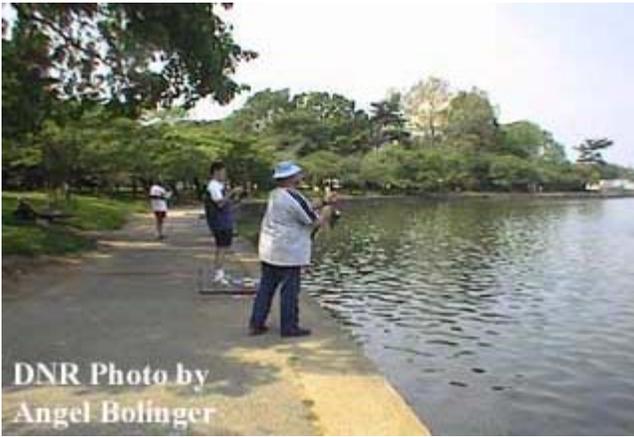
"Are you going to eat that?"

"Why are you using that sling to lower the fish into the water?"

and each time they patiently answered every question. The camaraderie amongst this group is truly impressive. CAG members traveled from all over the United States for this fish-in, which is strictly catch and release with no money going to the winner. CAG Fish-Ins provides these specialty anglers opportunities to fish with others interested in carp. And when I say interested in carp, I mean it.

WHY FISH FOR CARP?

You are probably asking yourself, why on earth, would anyone fish for carp and spend top dollar for the equipment? Carp fishing provides an excellent opportunity to catch big fighting fish from shore. In addition, carp are challenging to catch. They require a special technique and knack - or should I say recipe.



Carp to CAG members, is like the sacred cow to people in India according to Nigil Griffin. CAG members are strictly catch and release anglers.

Required equipment at their fish-ins includes a net, pad, and sling. This equipment is used to minimize handling stress to the carp so that the carp can be released for someone else to enjoy in the future.

So here is how the handling procedure works:

Anglers typically use a 42-inch triangle net to bring the carp on shore. Next the net with the carp in it is placed on a pad while the hook is removed. The carp is placed into a special sling if it is going to be weighed.

The sling also serves as a way to **gently lower** the carp back into the water. These techniques are utilized to reduce stress on the carp. Carp are not left on shore or kicked back into the water.

EQUIPMENT

CAG taught me the reason they can lounge around. It is because of the alarms they have attached to their fishing rods. These alarms inform the angler when they have a bite. A remote strike indicator pager is also available. For example, if one guy wants to go socialize, he can take this portable strike indicator with him, which will let him know when one of his rods has a bite. In fact, this pager will tell him which rod, and the strike intensity!

Rods

The CAG members I talked to had rods ranging from \$200 to \$500. Graphite rods are common, but kevlar is better (and of course much more expensive).

Reels

The bare minimum reel is one that holds at least 150 yards of 12-pound test. There is also a difference in American and European reels.

A good selection of carp fishing equipment and bait is hard to find here in the United States. A few retail catalogs carry a limited selection of products. All of these guys had equipment they purchased from Europe, where people fish for carp more than any other fish.

This brings me to another point. There are two styles of carp fishing, American and European. American style is defined as using equipment that is not specifically designed for carp. Most people use American set-ups when they first get into carp fishing. Like most sports, once addicted, the upgrade to European products is inevitable. Familiar companies like Daiwa and Shimano offer a huge selection of carp gear in Europe, but not here in the states since the market is not well established.

GETTING STARTED FOR ABOUT \$50

Beginner (American Style)

Carp fishing does not require spending a bank-breaking amount of money. One can get started with a basic Ugly Stick (graphite rod) made by Shakespeare with a reel that holds at least 150 yards of 12 pound test line. Most tackle shops or catalogs will have something along that line. Tackle needs include: a net, size 7 barrel swivels, strong and sharp hooks size 4 to 6, and canned sweet corn. Select a spot close to shore with about four to five feet of water. Throw handfuls of corn in that area (this is called chumming). Place four to 5 kernels on a hook and fish with a tight line. Prop the rod up and wait for a bite.

WHERE TO FISH IN THIS AREA

Carp are found in all of the Chesapeake Bay tributaries, many reservoirs and lakes. Just this week, I heard of anglers catching 20 to 30 pound carp in Prettyboy Reservoir. Deep Creek Lake also has its share of sacred cows.

BAIT

Doughballs come in a plethora of flavors. Dave Dicks likes to carry a variety of doughballs with him. He usually has at least one kind of fruit and savory (such as liver, fish, meat, and birdseed) doughball with him on all his fishing trips. Bob Bernowski used such secret ingredients as anise (black licorice) or toffee in his doughballs. I noticed that garbonzo beans were often in the chum mixtures. Oil based ones are good in the summer since the warmer temperatures help disperse the oil and attract more fish. Boilies are another bait option. A boilie is similar to a doughball except that it is boiled.

Chumming is extremely important. Initially, chumming helps attract the carp into your area. Once, there, chumming is necessary to keep them in the area. A good mixture of chum is also important. It is best to use a chum mixture that consists of something that will do each of the following: immediately work its way to the bottom, gradually sink, and disintegrate over time. There are a few devices that carp anglers use to get the chum out including sling shots, scoops with extension arms, and devices that can be casted.

You can make your own bait. Here is a basic recipe from Nigil Griffin, a CAG member.

Ingredients:

- Can of corn
- Plain bread crumbs
- 1 c powdered milk
- Water

Mix plain bread crumbs with 1 cup of powdered milk. Take the juice from the can of corn and add it to the mixture along with a few kernels.

Add water to until you get a mix that will bind together.

INTERESTING CARP FACTS

- Carp are native to Europe and Asia.
- The common carp, *Cyprinus carpio*, was introduced into the Chesapeake Bay area in 1877.
- Carp can tolerate salinities up to 17 parts per thousand (ppt).
- They are omnivorous, but mainly feed on plants.
- Spawning starts in late spring (Right Now!).
- The oldest documented carp lived up to 40 years, but the average life span is less than 20 years.

- The world record carp weighed 57 pounds.
- Maryland State Record Carp for freshwater is 47 pounds, 8 ounces.
- Maryland State Record Carp for tidal water is 44 pounds, 6 ounces.

For more information on the CAG or carp fishing, check out their WebPages at www.carpanglersgroup.org. These WebPages contain a wealth of valuable knowledge pertaining to topics such as carp terminology, recipes, tackle information, pictures, Fish-In dates.