

# Chapter IX -The Compleat Angler

The chapter offers a detailed exploration of carps, hailed as the "queen of rivers" and esteemed for their cunning and difficulty to catch. Originally not native to England, carps were introduced by Mr. Mascall from Sussex, a region rich in these fish. The narration delves into historical anecdotes and observations from various sources to illustrate the carp's habits, breeding patterns, and culinary value. It explains that carps were relatively recent additions to England's fauna, alongside other foreign imports like hops and turkeys.

Discussing their hardiness, Piscator points out that carps, capable of living out of water for extended periods, have intriguing breeding habits, such as spawning multiple times a year in favorable conditions. These conditions typically include warm, still waters with ample vegetation for the eggs to adhere to, unlike the cooler, flowing rivers where breeding is less common. Some ponds, especially warmer ones without predatory fish like pikes and perch, can support massive increases in carp populations.

Carps are noted for their potential longevity and size, with accounts of individuals growing to extraordinary dimensions and ages, though the narrator admits to never witnessing such specimens in England. The mystery of carps' presence in certain ponds but not others, despite similar conditions, is highlighted, alongside odd phenomena like significant numbers disappearing without apparent cause. Furthermore, ailments like frogs harming or killing carps by adhering to them are recounted.

Offering practical angling advice, the narrator emphasizes patience and specific baits like worms, pastes, and certain innovative methods to attract carps. The preparation of bait involves a mix of flesh (rabbit or cat), flour, and sweeteners formed into balls, with variations in ingredients for year-round preservation or specific fishing strategies. Besides bait preparation, angling for carps also involves specific techniques and timings, primarily around dawn or dusk in warmer months, to increase the chances of catching these elusive fish.

Lastly, the chapter concludes with a sophisticated recipe for preparing carp, suggesting a ceremonial and high regard for the fish not only as a sporting challenge but also as a culinary delight. This recipe includes marinating the carp in claret wine with herbs, onions, oysters, anchovies, and spices, showcasing the carp's esteemed position in gastronomy.