



66. TENCH / SCHLEIE (*Tinca tinca*)

IDENTIFICATION: The tench is thickest and has a short and round head and tiny scales coated with slippery mucus. Depending on the water, its predominant color is a dark to light shade of olive green, becoming golden or yellowish at the belly and underside. The round-shaped fins are uniformly dark gray or green. The caudal fin is slightly forked, and the dorsal fin is erect. The tench has one barbel at each corner of its small mouth. The iris of the small eye is orange-red. Mature tench may reach a length of about 7 inches, although the average length is 11 inches.

HABITAT: Tench inhabit most European waters, and usually share living space with carp. They prefer the lower regions of slow moving streams, and lakes and ponds with soft bottoms and dense weed beds. Tench hibernate buried in mud during winter, and take similar protective action during summer droughts. Tench thrive best in warm waters with temperatures of 15 ° to 27 °Celsius. They are quite robust and can stand much cooler water than the carp.

FOOD:

Diet: Tench are summer fish and feed only at water temperatures above 15 °Celsius. They usually search for food during the early morning or late evening, although their eyesight is poor. They eat small aquatic animals, worms, and stir up the muddy bottom as they feed.

Value: Tench have a high economic value in Germany and are usually bred in carp ponds. The meat is very tasty, has few bones, and is considered good table fare.

SPAWNING: Tench spawn in weedy and shallow waters during May and July. The female deposits about 300,000 eggs on water plants. The small fry emerge after a short time and usually hide in dense weed growths. Young tench are about 3 inches long after 1 year, 6 inches after 2 years and approx. 7 inches after 3 years. Tench are mature at 3 years and weight about 3/4 of a pound.