

Channel Catfish

Ictalurus punctatus

By Matt Elya



Taxonomy

- Class: Actinopterygii
- Order: Siluriformes (Catfish)
- Family: Ictaluridae (North American Freshwater Catfishes)
- Genus: *Ictalurus* (Bullhead Catfish)
- Species: *punctatus* (Channel Catfish)

Identification and Characteristics

- Counter shade coloration
 - Bluish olive, gray, or black on the dorsal side, white on the ventral side
 - Dark spots scattered along the sides of the body
- 4 pairs of barbels
 - 2 pairs on chin
 - 1 pair on side of upper jaw
 - 1 pair on top of snout
- 400 to 600 mm in length
- Scaleless



Key Features

- Slightly subterminal mouth
 - Upper jaw projects past lower jaw
- Bony ridge between the skull and dorsal fin
- Dorsal fin
 - 1 spine
 - 6-7 rays
- Anal fin
 - 23-29 rays
- Deeply forked tail
- Adipose Fin



Breeding Habits

- Males
 - Darken in color
 - Spots on body become hard to distinguish
 - Swollen area behind and above the eyes develop
- Nest Building
 - Males select a secluded dark area to build a nest (log jams, bank undercuts, rocks)
 - Fan away sediment



Mating Habits

- Nest building and spawning occurs in late spring to early summer
 - Water temperature reaches 23°C
 - Usually only one spawning period per year
 - Gelatinous eggs mass
 - Males guard nest
 - Remove sediment and waste
- Mature and spawning at age 3

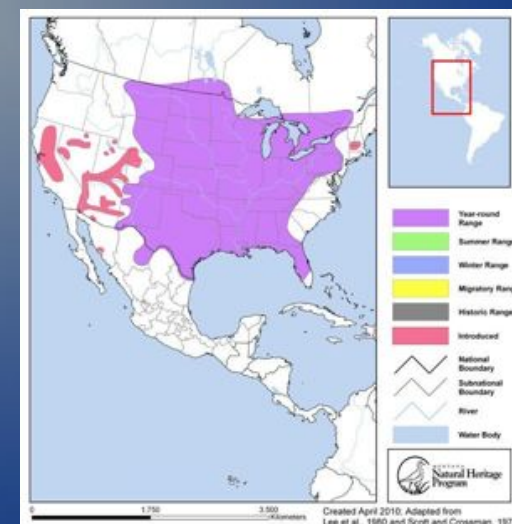


Habitat

- Inhabit streams, rivers, lakes, and reservoirs
- Prefer clear water streams but can tolerate muddy water
 - Prefer well oxygenated water
 - Prefer streams with a moderate to swift current
 - Sand, rubble, or gravel bottoms
- Found near structure
 - Rocks, logs, deep holes



Home Range



Diet and Human Impact

- Diet
 - Consists mainly of small fish, crustaceans, clams, snails, aquatic insects, and even small mammals
 - But will eat just about anything
- Human Impact
 - Most widely cultivated warm water fish in North America
 - Popular sport fish



Interesting Facts

- Females can lay 3,000 to 4,000 eggs per pound of body weight
- Males will eat eggs while guarding nests
- Hybridizes with Blue Catfish
- The largest Channel Catfish caught was 58 pounds
- One study in the Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri, found that Channel Catfish did not reach a size of 13 inches total length until they were 8 years old

Works Cited

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Questions?

