

Ohio Department of Natural Resources

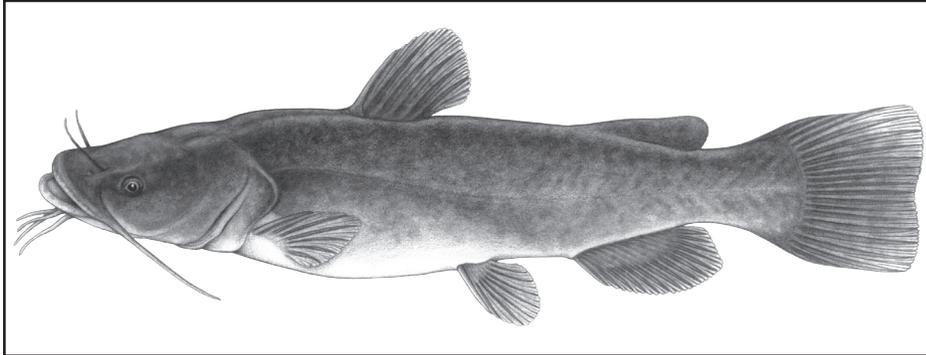
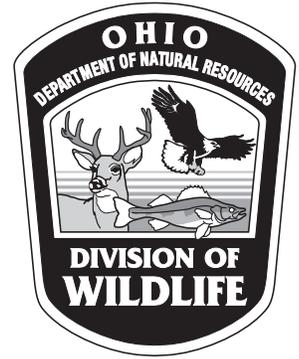
Division of Wildlife

Life History Notes

Flathead Catfish

Common Names: Shovelhead, Mudcat

Scientific Name: *Pylodictis olivaris*



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Identification

The flathead catfish is the only catfish in Ohio with its head flattened between the eyes and whose lower jaw is longer than the upper jaw. This is also the only large catfish with a square tail. Their body color is usually yellow-olive or a dark brown with dark brown blotches. Their belly is yellow or yellowish white.

Range and Habitat

Flathead catfish are native to Ohio and can be found in large river systems and a handful of inland lakes. Adults prefer deep pools with slow current and cover, such as submerged logs and drift piles.

Life History

Flathead catfish spawn when water temperatures reach 70° F. They build nests in dark secluded shelters such as natural cavities, undercut banks, or near large submerged objects. The eggs are laid in a compact golden-yellow mass which is fanned continuously. The egg mass may contain as many as 100,000 eggs. After hatching, the young remain near the nest for several days in a large compact school. Flathead catfish feed almost exclusively on live fish.

Adult Size

The average Ohio flathead catfish ranges between 5 and 15 pounds; however, they can grow much larger. The Ohio state record for this species is 76 pounds, 8 ounces and measured 55.6 inches in length. Flatheads as large as 80 pounds have been seen.

Fishing Methods

Flathead catfish are caught on live bait, such as large suckers or chubs. Anglers should use heavy tackle and cast near large submerged objects or drift piles. Fishing at night is often a successful technique for flathead catfish.