

Burbot



photo-Rob Criswell

Burbot

Family Burbot (Gadidae).

Status: Threatened--inland populations only.

PA Watershed Range: Erie, Ohio.

This is one strange-looking fish! It looks like a cross between a catfish and a bowfin. It has a tube sticking out of each nostril that looks like the barbels (whiskers) of a catfish. Another barbel sticks out from the tip of the lower jaw. The long dorsal fin on top and anal fin on the bottom are similar to those of a bowfin.

Burbot are the only Pennsylvania freshwater fish that originally came from the ocean as a member of the codfish family. They can grow to about 46 inches long, but most are only half that size. Unlike most Pennsylvania fish, burbot reproduce in the middle of winter under a covering of ice. During the night, they spread their eggs in shallow areas of a lake or stream's sandy or gravelly bottom. Eggs drift along the bottom until they hatch in about 30 days. When they grow up, they like deep, cold water. You'll find them in Lake Erie and where the Allegheny River starts in northwest Pennsylvania. Burbot are a threatened species in our inland waters but not in Lake Erie.



PLAY

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