

Dedicated to the Memory of  
Commissioner Enoch S. "Inky" Moore



# PLAY

Summer  
2011

**Pennsylvania • League • of • Angling • Youth**

by Miranda Smith

## Fishing for Catfish— Nighttime Summer Fun

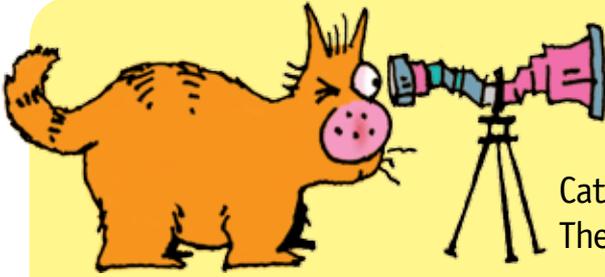


School's out, and you're enjoying that hot summer weather. There's a ton of outdoor fun to be had during the long days of summer—swimming, hiking, biking and, of course, fishing. Did you also know that you could have a great time fishing at night? Nighttime is one of the best times to fish during the summer. Fish are looking

to stay cool, and they are not very interested in feeding during the midday heat. In fact, nighttime is the best time to fish for catfish.

This issue of *PLAY* is all about fishing for catfish. Learn about Pennsylvania catfish, night safety, catfishing equipment and bait, and where to go fishing for catfish.

[www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com)



# Catfish: Taking a Closer Look

Catfish mostly feed at the bottom and at night. They have many characteristics that help them find food.

## Catfish Characteristics

Heavy, bony head and a small gas bladder make it easier for catfish to sink or stay on the bottom.

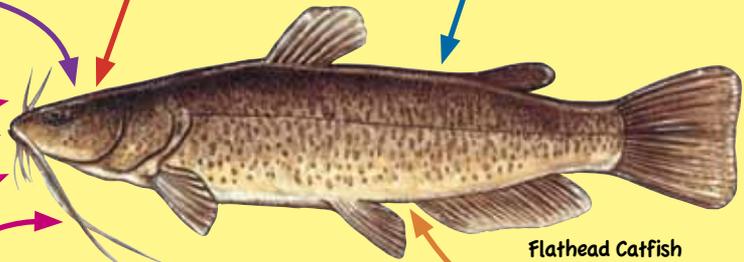
Nostrils have folds of tissue that are highly sensitive to smell.

Flattened head to dig through the bottom for food.

Smooth, scaleless skin that is covered with taste buds.

Fleshy "whiskers," called barbels, are loaded with taste buds that help find food in murky water and at night.

Flat belly helps to lie at the bottom.



Flathead Catfish

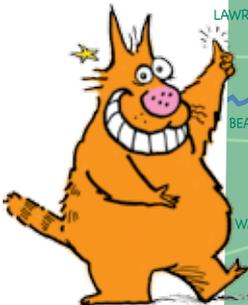
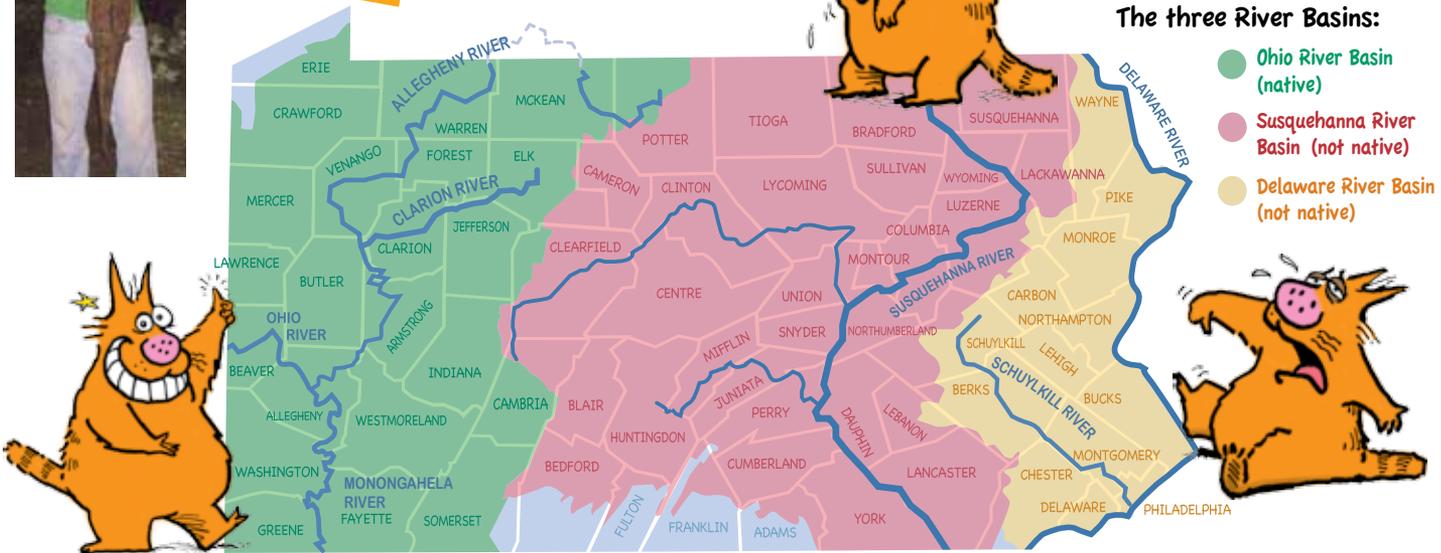


Flathead Catfish



### The three River Basins:

- Ohio River Basin (native)
- Susquehanna River Basin (not native)
- Delaware River Basin (not native)



## Flathead Catfish: Friend or Foe?

In western Pennsylvania, flathead catfish are native to the Ohio River Basin. Flathead catfish have recently been introduced to eastern Pennsylvania waters and could possibly harm other native fish and aquatic species. What should you do if you catch a flathead catfish in the Susquehanna River or Delaware River basins? This includes flathead catfish caught in the Schuylkill River. Only take fish if you plan on eating them. Flathead catfish are now included under the statewide 50 fish per day, no minimum size limit.

A **native species** is one that normally lives in a certain region or habitat.

# Sundown Safety: Playing It Safe at Night

**Never go alone, take a buddy.**

- **Lights**—bring a flashlight (or two) and some extra batteries. Headlamps or headlights that clip on your hat, for hands-free light, are very handy.
- **First Aid Kit**—carry a good first aid kit and know how to use it.

- **Warm Clothes**—it can get cold at night, even in the summer. Dressing in layers will keep you comfortable.
- **Insect Repellent**—you can skip the sunscreen. Just be sure to replace it with some bug repellent.

## Boat Safety

- **Life Jacket (Personal Flotation Device or PFD)**—a life jacket can save your life if you fall into the water. Wear it! Take the **Wear It Pennsylvania!** pledge at [www.WearItPennsylvania.com](http://www.WearItPennsylvania.com).
- **Boat Lights**—make sure your navigation lights are in working order. All vessels must show required running lights between the hours of sunset and sunrise and during periods of restricted visibility, such as fog and heavy rain.
- **Sounding Device**—Motorboats less than 12 meters in length (about 40 feet) must carry some mechanical means of making a sound signal. This device may be hand-, mouth- or power-operated. An athletics coach's whistle is acceptable. Larger motorboats more than 12 meters in length must carry a whistle or bell.

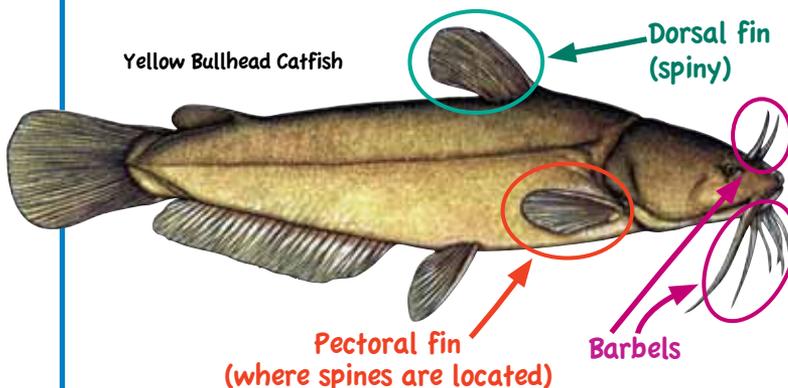


Operators of unpowered boats are required to carry a device such as an athletic whistle capable of making a prolonged blast that can be heard by another boat operator in time to avoid a collision.

- **Weather**—Check the weather to make sure there is no fog or storms looming.

For more information on boating regulations, see your *Pennsylvania Boating Handbook*.

## Handling Catfish



Catfish have a sharp spine on each of their two pectoral fins and on the dorsal fin. A good way to avoid these spines is to hold the catfish with your thumb behind the pectoral fin on one side. On the other side, place your "pointer finger" in front of the other pectoral fin and the rest of your fingers behind it. The barbels (whiskers) are not sharp and do not sting.



## Catching Catfish

Are you a picky eater? Catfish are definitely not picky eaters. They'll eat just about anything they find. Anglers have caught catfish on lures, nightcrawlers,

crickets, store-bought stinkbait, baitfish (whole or cut), chicken livers, dog food, shrimp, cheese, bacon, bologna and even doughnuts!

### **Stinkbait**

is bait that puts odor into the water.

### **Baitfish**

is a fish used as bait to catch a larger fish.

There are **two things** to keep in mind when rigging your line for catfish:



**1. Go for the stink!** Remember, catfish have an excellent sense of smell. Using something that smells will catch their attention.

**2. Get low.** There are different ways to rig your line for catfishing. Try fishing off the bottom, where catfish often live. This doesn't necessarily mean deep water, especially if you are fishing at night. Catfish become more active once the sun sets and the water cools and will move from one area to another. You'll be successful fishing for catfish in shallow waters once the sun goes down.

## Night Fishing Tips

✓ Paint the tip of your fishing rod with a bright color or wrap it with reflective tape. This will make it easier to see in the dark.

✓ Attach a bell to the tip of your rod. It will alert you when you have a bite.

✓ When night fishing at a lake or pond, cast your line near a light source. Catfish will be after the fish that are attracted to the light.

# Recipes for Success

Want to try making your own catfish bait?  
Here are two easy recipes.



## Catfish Dough Bait

Ingredients:

- Water
- Flour
- Something smelly such as garlic, cinnamon, sardines, cheese, anise, ground-up chicken livers or baitfish

Combine water and flour to make a very thick dough. The more flour you add, the thicker it will become. It should be thick enough to roll into small balls and stay on your hook. Next, add something smelly. See ingredients above for ideas.

You may want to separate your dough into different containers or plastic zip bags, so you can experiment with different smells.

## Catfish "Stinky Dog" Bait

Ingredients:

- Hot dogs
- Crushed garlic (packaged in a jar)
- Salt (optional)



Slice hot dogs into  $\frac{1}{2}$ - to  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch slices and place in a wide-mouth jar with crushed garlic. You may also want to add a little bit of salt. Keep refrigerated.

These recipes can be used with the **sliding sinker rig**. This is a popular rig for catfish. It allows catfish to take the bait without feeling the weight of the sinker.

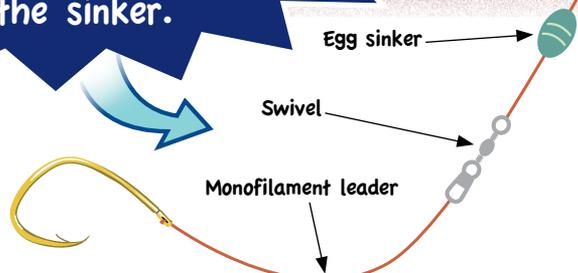
# PLAY

Editor: Spring Gearhart

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# Where to Fish for Catfish

The good thing about catfish is that you can always find them close to home. Catfish are found in almost any water in Pennsylvania. This includes our big rivers, small rivers, creeks, streams, ponds and lakes. Here is a map with some hotspots for catfishing. Circle the hotspot that is the closest to your home.



## Northwest Hotspots

- ★ Lake Arthur for channel catfish and bullheads (Butler County)
- ★ Pymatuning Reservoir for channel catfish and bullheads (Crawford County)
- ★ Shenango River Lake for channel catfish and bullheads (Mercer County)

## Northcentral Hotspots

- ★ Foster Joseph Sayers Lake for bullhead and channel catfish (Centre County)
- ★ Curwensville Lake for bullheads (Clearfield County)

## Northeast Hotspots

- ★ Lake Wallenpaupack for channel catfish (Pike County)
- ★ Susquehanna River (entire length) for channel catfish (all counties in the Northeast Region)
- ★ Francis Slocum State Park for white catfish (Luzerne County)
- ★ Briar Creek Lake for bullheads (Columbia County)

## Southwest Hotspots

- ★ Allegheny, Ohio and Monongahela rivers for flathead and channel catfish (entire lengths)
- ★ High Point Lake for bullheads (Somerset County)
- ★ Yellow Creek Lake for bullheads (Indiana County)

## Southcentral Hotspots

- ★ Susquehanna River around Long Level, Falmouth and Fort Hunter for channel catfish (York, Lancaster and Dauphin counties)
- ★ Raystown Lake for channel catfish, white catfish and bullheads (Huntingdon County)

## Southeast Hotspots

- ★ Schuylkill River for channel, white and flathead catfish (entire length)
- ★ Blue Marsh Lake for channel catfish, bullheads and flathead catfish (Berks County)
- ★ Struble Lake for channel catfish (Chester County)

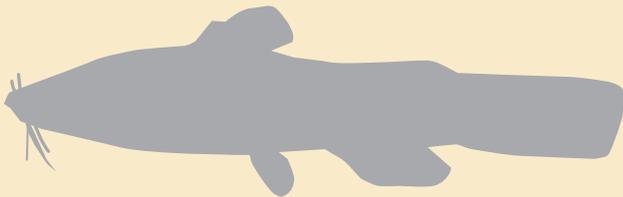
# Pennsylvania Catfish Field Cards

Pennsylvania has 13 species of catfish. These include three species commonly called "bullheads" and three called "catfish." The rest are called "madtoms." Madtoms are not often seen, because they are very small, secretive and uncommon. The black bullhead, the mountain madtom, the tadpole madtom and the northern madtom are endangered species. The brindled madtom is a threatened species in Pennsylvania.

**Endangered species**  
are in danger of becoming extinct.

**Threatened species**  
are in danger of becoming endangered.

*Complete these field cards of Pennsylvania catfish by cutting and pasting the correct fish to the correct card.*



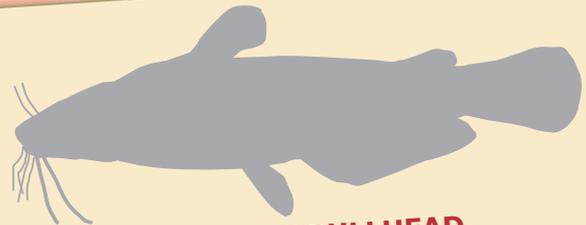
## STONECAT

**Habitat:** Rocky riffles or rapids in creeks and small to large rivers, but can also be found over gravelly, wind-swept and wave-stirred shoals of lakes.

**Chin Barbels:** white

**Tail:** rounded or square looking

**Typical Size:** 6 to 8 inches



## YELLOW BULLHEAD

**Habitat:** Prefer backwaters and slow currents in streams and rivers, but they also live in ponds and reservoirs.

**Chin Barbels:** white or yellow

**Tail:** rounded

**Typical Size:** 15 to 25 inches



## CHANNEL CATFISH

**Habitat:** Usually found in clear, warm lakes and rivers with hard bottoms. They like swift currents.

**Chin Barbels:** black

**Tail:** deeply forked with pointed lobes

**Typical Size:** 15 to 25 inches



## BROWN BULLHEAD

**Habitat:** Found most often in ponds, bays of larger lakes and in slow-moving sections and pools of warmwater streams.

**Chin Barbels:** dark, grayish black

**Tail:** less rounded, almost square

**Typical Size:** 8 to 16 inches

