

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

PLAY

Pennsylvania • League • of • Angling • Youth

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by Kim Mumper

The Catfish Family

Almost everyone knows a catfish when they see one. Those barbels or whiskers are a giveaway! Our Pennsylvania catfish belong to the *Ictaluridae* family—the bullhead catfish. Thirteen species of this family inhabit our waters—there's at least one species of catfish in every watershed in the state. The Ohio River watershed is home to all catfish species except for one, the margined madtom.

Pennsylvania's catfish come in small, medium and large. The largest are the flathead and channel catfish, with the flathead tipping the state record scales at 48 pounds, 6 ounces! That's one big fish! Fifteen pound channel cats, and twenty to thirty pound flatheads are not uncommon. Medium-sized catfish include three bullheads (yellow, brown and black) and the white catfish. Black bullheads are endangered in Pennsylvania. Adult bullheads measure between 15 to 20 inches in length. The smallest catfish are madtoms, and are often mistaken for minnows. Stonecats are the largest of the madtoms. They are usually around six to eight inches long. Other madtoms measure up to around four inches. The northern, mountain and tadpole madtoms are endangered. The brindled madtom is threatened.

This issue of PLAY focuses on these bottom-dwelling, warmwater, easily recognized fish. You can read about their life cycle, check out the different species and learn new ways to catch them. So, read on about Pennsylvania's catfish!

For more information about Pennsylvania's catfish and other fish, check out the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission's website at www.fish.state.pa.us/mpag1.htm.



 BROWN BULLHEAD

