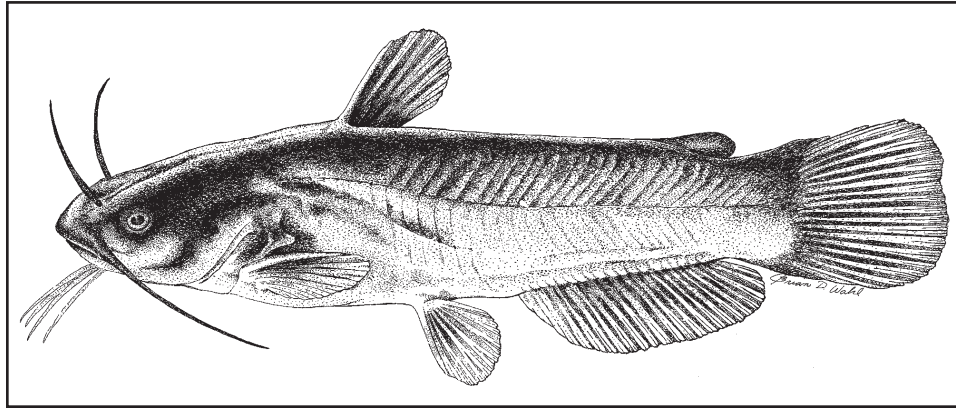
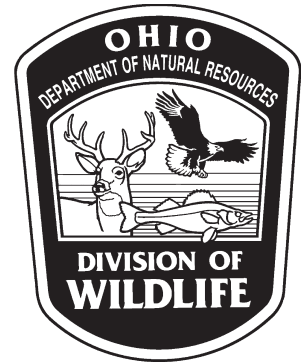


Life History Notes

Bullhead

Common Names: Black, brown, or yellow bullhead

Scientific Name: *Ameiurus spp.*



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Identification

The three bullhead species are difficult to tell apart. Both the black and brown bullhead have black chin barbels while the yellow bullhead has white barbels. In addition, black bullhead have 17 to 21 rays in the slightly rounded anal fin and no serrations on their pectoral spines. Browns have 22 or 23 rays in the anal fin and deep serrations on the pectoral spines. The yellow bullhead has a longer, less rounded anal fin than the other two species. Furthermore, it has 25 or 26 rays on the anal fin and less deeply serrated pectoral spines than the brown bullhead. All three of these catfishes lack scales and have similar body color, varying from yellow-olive-brown to brownish black.

Range and Habitat

Bullheads are native to Ohio and are found throughout the state. The black bullhead is able to tolerate turbid water and is more widely distributed in Ohio than the other two species. The brown bullhead is common in areas with little or no vegetation and having relatively clean, clear water. They are most numerous in the northern third of Ohio. Yellow bullheads prefer water bodies with large amounts of vegetation. The largest populations of yellow bullhead seem to occur in west central Ohio.

Life History

Bullheads start spawning around mid-May and continue through June. They build nests in natural cavities or make saucer shaped depressions near submerged cover, such as tree roots or sunken logs. Females usually deposit between 300 to 10,000 eggs in the nest. At least one of the parents remains to continually fan and guard the nest. After hatching, the young swim around in a dense ball and are guarded by the male for several weeks. Adult bullheads feed primarily by taste and smell and are most active at night. They eat a wide variety of food that includes: insect larvae, small crayfish, snails, and dead animals.

Adult Size

Bullheads do not reach large sizes. The average bullhead caught by anglers weighs less than one pound. The state record bullhead weighed 4 pounds 4 ounces and was 18.5 inches long.

Fishing Methods

Bullheads bite readily on a variety of baits. Bullhead fishing requires only simple, inexpensive equipment. Worms, chicken liver, or cat-talpa worms should be fished near the bottom.