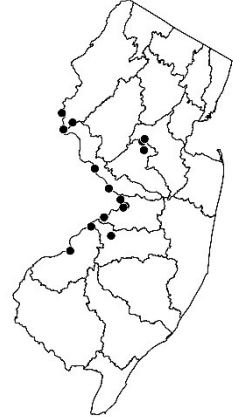


Flathead Catfish (*Ptyodictis olivaris*)

Historical Presence	Abundance	Life History	Management
Non-Native	Occasional	Freshwater	Invasive

General Information

A large catfish with a broad, flattened head with small eyes on top, and lower jaw projecting beyond the upper jaw. The Flathead Catfish is considered an invasive species capable of causing ecological damage by out-competing other recreationally important, as well as native fish assemblages for food and habitat. They are extremely predaceous, reproducing and dispersing rapidly in river systems. Flathead Catfish have been documented to eat substantial numbers of American Shad during their spawning run.



Geographic Range

Lower Great Lakes and Mississippi R. basins from w. PA to White-Little Missouri R. system, ND, and south to LA, Gulf Slope from Mobile Bay Drainage, GA and AL, to Mexico. Introduced elsewhere in U.S. Within NJ, mostly restricted to Delaware R. and its tributaries.

Habitat Description

Pools with logs and other debris in low to moderate gradient, small to large rivers; lakes; and impoundments. Young prefer rocky and sandy runs and riffles.

Optimum Habitat Requirements

Dissolved Oxygen	
Temperature	21.7 – 30 °C
pH	
Turbidity	Moderate/high
Current	Slow/moderate

Diet

Fry	Aquatic insects, zooplankton
Juveniles	Small fish, crayfish, aquatic insects
Adults	Fish, crayfish, clams
Notes: Actively forage at night. Voracious predator, adults feed on live prey.	

Reproduction

Time of Year	May – August	Age Males Mature	3 – 4
Temperature Range	20 – 29 °C	Age Females Mature	4 – 5
Water Depth	1 – 5 m	Nest	Natural cavities
Substrate	Variable	Egg Type	Demersal (adhesive)
Time of Day		Parental Care	Male guards
Critical pH		Days to Hatching	6 – 8
Velocity Range		Oxygen Level	

Notes: Eggs laid in compact, gelatinous mass on the substrate. Male guards and agitates eggs with fins. Young remain in school near the nest for several days after hatching before dispersing.

Size and Growth

Adults typically 400 – 900 mm, capable of surpassing 20 pounds in NJ waters. Maximum age 16-20 years.

References

(Lee and Terrell 1987; Smith 2002; Kwak et al. 2006)

- Kwak, T. J., D. S. Waters, and W. E. Pine III. 2006. Age, growth, and mortality of introduced flathead catfish in Atlantic rivers and a review of other populations. *North American Journal of Fisheries Management* 26(1):73–87.
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