

LOUISIANA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

Jefferson Parish
Orleans Parish
St. Charles Parish

1825 Bonnie Ann Drive
Marrero, LA 70072
341-7271, 341-7272

SEA GRANT PROGRAM



Vol. 10. No. 10
October 22, 1981

LAGNIAPPE

THOUGHTS ON FUEL

Recently, an oil company expert has predicted another fuel crunch coming sometime in 1983. This one would particularly affect fishermen who use diesel. The fuel crunch, if it occurs, will be due to the conservation of gasoline by Americans. Gasoline consumption dropped 6% from 1979 to 1980 and predictions for 1981 are for another 4 to 6% decline in gasoline consumption. However, diesel fuel consumption is showing a continuing increase in demand.

The problem is when an oil company cracks a barrel of crude oil a certain percentage comes out as gasoline and a certain percentage comes out as middle distillates like diesel. Right now oil companies are already overstocked with gasoline and many refineries are cutting back production. Their storage tanks are full of gasoline and sales are down. In the "good old days" diesel was just a by-product of gasoline production and oil companies sold it cheap just to get rid of it.

That very same cheap price has caused truckers, farmers and fishermen to switch to diesel and drive up the demand. If gasoline demand continues to decline or even stays the same, and diesel demand continues to increase, the tables will be turned and gasoline will become the by-product. This can mean even higher prices for diesel and even reduced supplies of diesel if the oil companies can't sell off their supply of gasoline and run out of storage space. Source: URI Commercial Fisheries Newsletter, July-August, 1981.

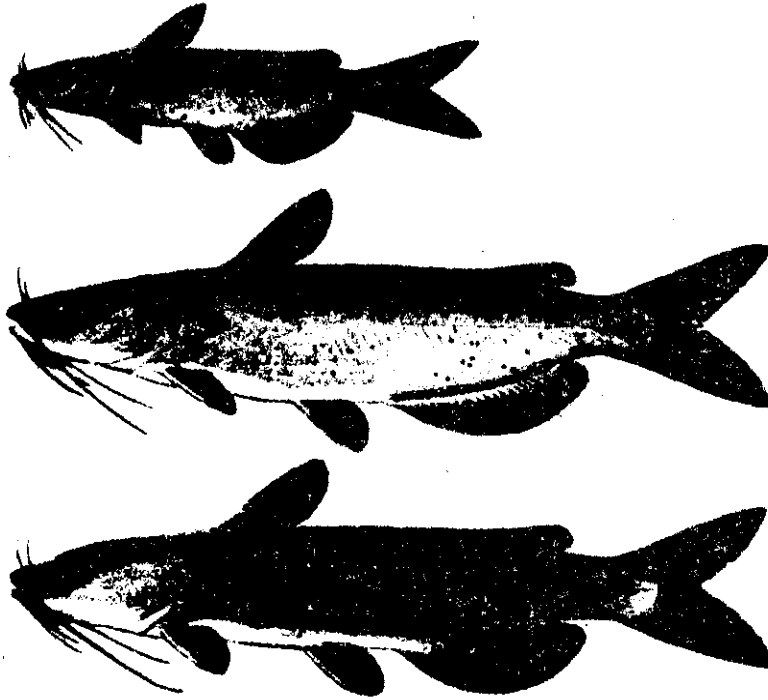
CATFISH ---WHAT'S IN A NAME

Over the years I've seen more arguments over catfish names than any other kind of fish. If you ask the average fisherman how many kinds of freshwater catfish we have in Louisiana, you could get any answer between 4 and 12.

The truth is that we've got six different kinds or species of catfish and one of those is real rare. What makes the subject so confusing is that the color of the water has a very strong effect on the color of the fish, so you really can't go by color. A channel catfish taken from a backswamp lake or a marsh is much darker than one taken from the muddy waters of the Mississippi or Atchafalaya Rivers.

The six kinds of catfish found in Louisiana are the blue catfish, the channel catfish, the flathead catfish, the yellow bullhead, the black bullhead and the brown bullhead.

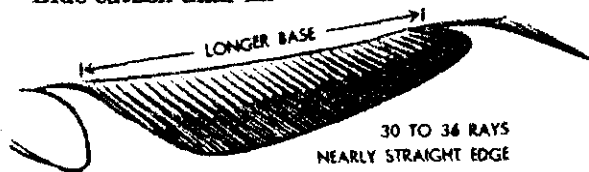
The channel catfish shown below has the most different names and is found in the most different areas of the state.



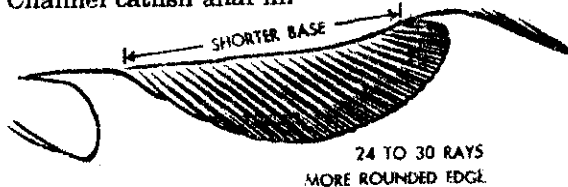
The top picture is of a young channel catfish, which in some parts of the state is called a "fiddler". The middle picture is a mature fish, and the bottom picture is a breeding male channel cat. When the male goes into his breeding cycle he turns a dark blue color and develops a swollen muscular forehead. In some parts of the state a breeding male is called a "bullhead", but he's still a channel catfish just the same. Besides being called bullheads and fiddlers, channel catfish also go by the names of eel catfish, willow catfish and blue channel catfish. The world record channel catfish is a 57 pounder caught in South Carolina, although they very seldom get over six pounds in Louisiana.

In Louisiana the channel catfish is most commonly confused with the blue catfish. There are several ways to tell them apart. The anal or belly fin on the channel catfish is more rounded than the blue cat's, which has an almost straight edge.

Blue catfish anal fin

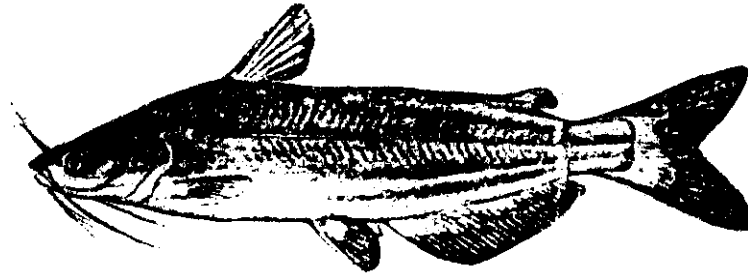


Channel catfish anal fin



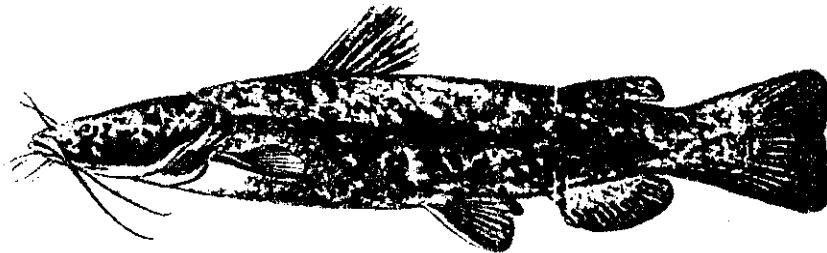
The blue cat also has more rays (ribs) in the fin than the channel cat does. Another thing to look at is the long whisker on each side of the mouth. The channel cat's are longer, thicker and much darker. The blue cat's whiskers are thin and light gray in color. Also the blue cat's upper jaw is longer than the lower one while a channel cat's jaws are the same length.

The blue catfish is the largest catfish in North America. While not many are caught that go over 100 pounds nowadays, early fishery biologists recorded quite a few over 200 pounds in the 1800's.



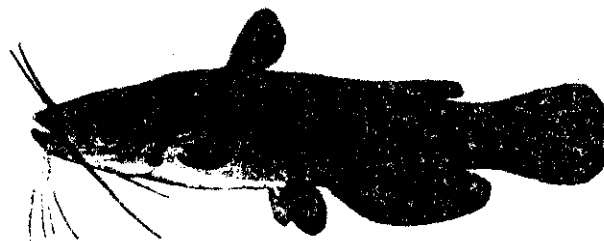
The blue catfish is primarily a river fish although some are caught in Lakes. They are the most common catfish in rivers like the Mississippi and Atchafalaya. The blue cat also goes by the names white cat, river cat, white fish, cold boarder and in some parts of the country, chucklehead cat.

The other big catfish found in Louisiana waters is the flat-head catfish. This big catfish (up to 80 or 90 pounds) also goes by the names goujon, yellow cat, tabby cat, Opelousas cat, mud cat and appaloosa cat.

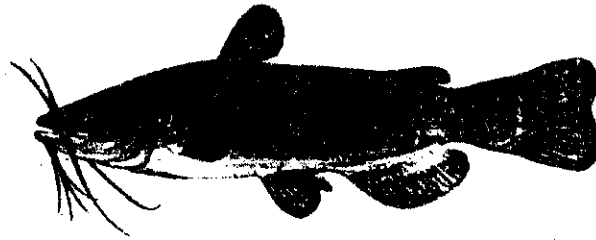


This catfish is kind of hard to mistake, because his head looks like a truck ran over it and flattened it. This olive-green colored catfish is found in just about all the fresh waters of the state — rivers, lakes, bayous and freshwater marshes. Unlike the channel and blue catfish which eat anything, it has a strong preference for live fish.

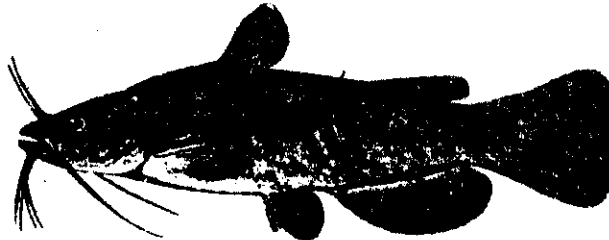
The other three species of catfish found in the state are bull-heads, or pollywogs as they are called in south Louisiana or mud cats as they are called in north Louisiana.



YELLOW BULLHEAD



BLACK BULLHEAD



BROWN BULLHEAD

Although they go by the names yellow, black and brown bullheads, you can't really go by the color of the fish. The yellow bullhead which is the largest and most common of the three in the state, can be separated from the other two by its yellow or cream colored chin whiskers.

While the brown and black bullheads both have black or dark chin whiskers, the brown bullhead has a freckled or blotchy color pattern on its body. The brown bullhead also has some large serrations or saw teeth on the backside of the spines on their side (pectoral) fins. In any case most bullheads you catch in Louisiana with black chin whiskers should be black bullheads. Brown bullheads are very rare and only been recorded in the state a few times.

THE GUMBO POT

Buttermilk Fried Shark

Because the Fish Awareness Education Project is promoting shark for October Fish and Seafood Month, I think a shark recipe is more than appropriate. I would strongly encourage anyone who has a chance to try shark to do so. It's one of the best tasting fish I've ever eaten.

For those of you that want to bring your own shark back from a fishing trip I'd like to offer one tip. As soon as possible after catching the shark make sure you gut it and if possible cut the head off and then ice it well. Shark has a very delicate flavor and taking this extra step will really keep it that way.

- 2 lbs. shark filets
- (cut into serving size pieces)
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 2 oz. tabasco sauce
- 1 cup biscuit mix
- 1 tsp. salt

Place fish in a single layer in a shallow dish. Pour the buttermilk and tabasco over the fish and let stand for 30 minutes, turning once. Combine biscuit mix and salt. Remove the fish from the buttermilk and roll in the biscuit mix. Place fish in a single layer in a fry basket. Fry in deep fat, 350 degrees for 3 to 5 minutes or until brown and fish flakes easily when tested with a fork. Drain on absorbent paper. Serves 6.

Sincerely,

Jerald Horst
Assoc. Area Agent
(Fisheries)
St. Charles, Jefferson
Orleans