

blue catfish *Ictalurus furcatus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Osteichthyes

Order: Siluriformes

Family: Ictaluridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The blue catfish may attain an average length of 20 to 44 inches. It is similar in appearance to the channel catfish but may be distinguished from it by its long, straight-edged anal fin and the absence of dark spots on the body. The blue catfish is pale blue to green on its back and sides and has a white belly. Its fins are colorless or white except for dark edges on the dorsal and tail fins. White barbels are present on the chin. The fish's body in front of the dorsal fin slopes downward steeply.

BEHAVIORS

The blue catfish may be found in the Mississippi, Illinois, Ohio and Wabash rivers in Illinois. This catfish lives in areas of swift current in rivers over a silt-free mud, sand or gravel bottom. The blue catfish migrates in rivers based on water temperature. It swims downstream in winter and back upstream in summer. This fish spawns in spring and summer. The male cleans out a nest that may be under a river bank, under a drift pile or a submerged log or in a muskrat or beaver burrow. The yellow eggs are deposited in the nest. Eggs hatch in about one week, and the young fish stay at the nest for about another week. The male guards the nest until the young leave it. The blue catfish uses its barbels to find food. It feeds mainly on the bottom, eating fishes, insects, crayfish, clams and mussels.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie Habitats

none

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