

brown bullhead

Ameiurus nebulosus

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Actinopterygii
Order: Siluriformes
Family: Ictaluridae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native



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young fish

FEATURES

The brown bullhead averages seven to 15 inches in length. It is green-brown, yellow-brown or blue-black on the back and upper sides. Many dark blotches are present along the sides. The brown bullhead has barbels, and the chin barbels are dark. The caudal (tail) fin is squared along the edge. A sawlike edge of “teeth” on the rear of the pectoral spine is also characteristic. An adipose fin is present.

BEHAVIORS

The brown bullhead may be found in glacial lakes in northeastern Illinois, floodplain lakes along the middle Illinois River and swamps in southwestern Illinois. Many aquatic plants must be present in the water where this fish lives. Adults are active at night, while young bullheads are active at dawn and dusk. Spawning occurs in May and June in roots and vegetation. The female fans out a nest with her fins. One of the parents stays with the eggs after they are fertilized to keep out predators and move fresh water (containing more oxygen) over them. The adults may stay with the newly hatched bullheads for a few days. This fish feeds on the bottom of its water body, eating both plant and animal materials.

ILLINOIS RANGE



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Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; lakes, ponds and reservoirs; peatlands; swamps

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none