

channel catfish *Ictalurus punctatus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Osteichthyes

Order: Siluriformes

Family: Ictaluridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The channel catfish has an average life span of eight years. The average size for this fish is one to two pounds in weight and 12 to 32 inches in length. It may attain a maximum length of 50 inches. The tail is forked, and the top half of the tail fin is longer than the bottom half. Small individuals have spots on their sides, but the spots tend to be absent in large fish. The edge of the anal fin is rounded. Four pairs of barbels (whiskerlike projections) surround the mouth. The channel catfish does not have scales but does have an adipose fin and a spine at the front edge of both the dorsal and pectoral fins. The upper jaw sticks out past the lower jaw. The fish is blue to green on the back and sides with a white belly.

BEHAVIORS

The channel catfish naturally lives in rivers and lakes. It is stocked in ponds and reservoirs. This fish is active at night. It reaches maturity at a length of 12 to 15 inches. Spawning May through July, the female deposits 2,500 to 70,000 eggs in a nest fanned out on the bottom or in an object on the bottom. Eggs hatch in six to 10 days. The male guards the eggs and fry while they are in the nest. The channel catfish feeds on the bottom, eating insects, fishes, crayfish, mollusks and plants.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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