

yellow bullhead *Ameiurus natalis*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Osteichthyes

Order: Siluriformes

Family: Ictaluridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The yellow bullhead grows to an average length of about seven to 13 and one-half inches. It has white or yellow chin barbels. Five to eight sawlike teeth are present on the back of the pectoral spine. They may be felt through the fin on a live fish. The rear edge of the tail fin is rounded or straight. The back is yellow-green to black, the sides are light yellow-green and the belly is yellow to white. The fins are dark, and there may be a dark stripe in the anal fin.

BEHAVIORS

The yellow bullhead may be found statewide in Illinois. This fish avoids strong currents and prefers relatively clear water in creeks, rivers, oxbows, ponds and lakes. The yellow bullhead spawns in spring. The female uses her fins and snout to fan and push materials on the bottom, making a depression. The eggs are deposited in this nest. One of the adults remains with the eggs and young fish until they reach about one inch in length. The young bullheads school in a tight mass, almost the shape of a ball. This fish uses its sense of smell to find food and to recognize individual fishes. It eats small crustaceans, insect larvae, crayfish, snails, plants and small fish.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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