



Channel Catfish

*Ctalarus punctatus*

The channel cat also called the spotted cat has a slender body with a deeply forked tail. The upper jaw is longer than the lower jaw and there are barbels around the mouth. The dorsal and pectoral spines are sharp and deeply serrated, and the anal fin is curved and has between 24 and 30 rays. The body is bluish silver on the sides and generally has dark spots. Some anglers mistakenly call channel catfish with few or no spots blue catfish. Kentucky record is 32 lbs caught in the Ohio River, 2004.

The flathead catfish also called shovelhead or mudcat catfish is the only catfish in the USA with its head flattened between the eyes and whose lower jaw is longer than the upper jaw. This is also the only large catfish with a square tail. Their body color is usually yellow-olive or a dark brown with dark brown blotches. Their belly is yellow or yellowish white. The Kentucky record is 97 lbs caught in Green River Lake, 1956.

The blue cat is also called fork-tailed catfish, humpback, chucklehead and are heavy-bodied with a wide head and high spot forward of center near the head called the dorsal hump. Upper jaw projects well beyond the lower. Bluish-gray body above, fading to white on sides and belly. No spots and a deeply forked tail. Smaller blue cats are often confused with channel catfish. The best way to distinguish between the two is by the 30-35 rays on the blue cat's anal fin with its straight outer margin versus the channel cat's 25 to 29 rays. Kentucky record is 104 lbs caught in the Ohio River, 1999.

The three bullhead species are difficult to tell apart. Both the black and brown bullhead have black chin barbels while the yellow bullhead has white barbels. In addition, black bullhead have 17 to 21 rays in the slightly rounded anal fin and no serrations on their pectoral spines. Browns have 22 or 23 rays in the anal fin and deep serrations on the pectoral spines. The yellow bullhead has a longer, less rounded anal fin than the other two species. Furthermore, it has 25 or 26 rays on the anal fin and less deeply serrated pectoral spines than the brown bullhead. All three of these catfishes lack scales and have similar body color, varying from yellow-olive-brown to brownish black. Kentucky record is 5lb 3oz caught in Guist Creek Lake, 1992