

North Carolina Sport Fish Profiles



White catfish

Scientific Name:

Ameiurus catus

Identification:

A member of the bullhead group of catfishes, the white catfish is usually blue-gray above, fading to gray on sides with a white belly. It has a moderately forked tail with rounded ends, and its upper jaw



Illustration by Duane Raver

extends slightly beyond the lower. The white catfish is sometimes mistaken for the channel catfish, but the white catfish has a much wider head and lacks black spots on its sides.

Habitats and Habits:

Unlike flathead and blue catfish, white catfish are native to rivers and streams that flow to the Atlantic Ocean. They can also be found in the French Broad and Pigeon rivers, although they may have been stocked in these Tennessee River tributaries. While quite common, white catfish are often overlooked. This may be in part to their small size compared to flathead, blue and channel catfish. However, these fish are aggressive feeders and have a tendency to feed more during the daytime than other catfish.

Fishing Techniques:

White catfish make excellent table fare, and anglers can catch them using many of the same methods for other catfish. Worms, minnows, scented baits and hellgrammites fished on or near the bottom work well.

Good Places to Fish:

White catfish can be found in lakes and rivers in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain. In the Piedmont, the impoundments on the Yadkin and Catawba rivers are popular places to fish, while the Tar, Roanoke and Chowan rivers have good numbers in the Coastal Plain.

Other Information:

NCARP Minimum Requirements: 4 pounds or 21 inches

State Record: 13 pounds from Lake James, May 21, 1990

World Record: 19 lbs., 5 oz. from Oakdale, Ca., May 7, 2005*

** Anglers provide information on their potential world-record catches directly to the International Game Fish Association, which maintains the world records for sport fishing.*