

Flathead Catfish



What Do We Know?

The Flathead Catfish, *Pylodictis olivaris* (also sometimes called 'mud cat' or 'yellow cat'), is native to rivers and lakes in the lower Great Lakes and Mississippi River watersheds and in the Gulf states. It was introduced into the James River in Virginia to provide recreational angling in the late 1960s and has since spread throughout the region. Flathead Catfish have smooth, scaleless skin that is typically pale yellow to light brown on the back and sides with heavily mottling that is black, brown, or olive brown. The head is broad and flattened with a lower jaw that projects beyond the upper jaw. The tail fin is only slightly notched and appears square or slightly rounded.

In areas where Flathead Catfish were introduced, they have severely reduced the abundance and diversity of native fish species. They are particularly damaging to fish populations as they switch to eating primarily other fish at 4 inches in length. They typically grow up to 45 inches and live up to 28 years. Flathead Catfish weighing up to 40 pounds have been reported in the Brandywine River, and a 37-inch, 26-pound fish was removed from Lums Pond in the Fall of 2022. They have few predators which allows them to grow large quickly. Their populations have the potential to expand rather rapidly once established; one nest can contain up to 100,000 eggs.

The first catch of a Flathead Catfish reported to state biologists was in 2010 from the Brandywine River. Historically, catches in Delaware have been confined to the Brandywine and Christina Rivers. A single catch of a Flathead Catfish in Lums Pond was recorded from a fishing tournament in 2019. In 2022, electrofishing surveys and removals were conducted there by Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) staff from July to October, resulting in the removal of 31 Flathead Catfish ranging in size from 7 inches to 37 inches. Preliminary stomach content analysis shows a diet consisting of Yellow Perch, White Perch, Bluegill, and other catfish species. DFW staff made a [video](#) with more information on Flathead Catfish.

If you catch a Flathead Catfish in Lums Pond, please remove it and alert park staff or contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife, Fisheries Section at (302)739-9914 or email Michael.Steiger@delaware.gov. Catches can also be reported online right from your smartphone using the [Invasive Fish Tracker App](#).

www.delawareinvasives.net
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National Invasive Species Awareness Week - 2023

Quick Facts

- Lifespan up to 28 years, average 12-14 years
- The world record came from Kansas and was 61 inches long and weighed 123 pounds!
- Males aggressively defend nests, eggs, and fry
- One nest can contain up to 100,000 eggs
- Switch to eating primarily other fish at 4 inches long
- Diet consists mostly of native perch and catfish species

