

YELLOW BULLHEAD - *Ameiurus natalis*

Range – Native distribution throughout the eastern and central United States. Introduced widely in Arizona. Now found throughout the United States. The yellow bullhead closely resembles the brown bullhead with a squat body and a round or square tail. It is yellow-olive to slate-black above and lighter, often yellow to yellow-olive, on its sides with little to no mottling. The belly may be white, cream or yellow. The chin barbels are yellow to buff or pale pink; the upper barbels, which are light to dark-brown, help distinguish this species from brown bullheads. The anal fin has a straight margin with 23 to 27 rays. The habitat is variable and includes vegetated areas of clear, shallow lakes, reservoirs, ponds, and slow-flowing streams. They are more tolerant of polluted environments than most other members of the catfish family.

Food Habits - Though scavengers, yellow bullheads prefer to feed on minnows, snails, shrimp and crayfish. They also will feed on insect larvae, vegetation and decaying organic matter. Scent and taste play a vital role in their feeding, most of which is done at night.

Life History - Spawning occurs in May and June as a rule, with eggs deposited in a nest usually adjacent to a submerged object. One or both parents take part in building the nest, and take turns caring for the eggs, which may number 2,000 to 4,000 and hatch in five to 10 days. The male guards the eggs and fry.

Life Span - Little information is available on age and growth of this species. Generally, they average less than one pound but can grow up to three pounds.

Sporting Qualities - Easy to catch on cut bait, worms, crickets, doughballs and a wide variety of natural and prepared baits. They can be caught at any time of day, but bite best at night. They are not strong fighters. They are important as a food fish in some areas and are the dominant species in some waters. The creamy flesh is quite good when taken from clean water.

Threats – Habitat loss and pollution.