



Northern Snakehead

(*Channa argus*)



Photo by: USGS
US Geological Survey
Bugwood.org

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Description

Northern snakeheads are large, aggressive fish commonly confused with native bowfin and burbot. Snakeheads are so named due to their flattened heads with dorsolateral eyes reminiscent of a snake's head. Snakeheads are large fish capable of growing up to 3ft in length. They have elongated dorsal and anal fins and all fins are supported only by rays (no lobes). Snakeheads coloration varies from dark to light brown but have distinctive dark, irregular blotches, occasionally resembling stripes.

Snakeheads can easily be distinguished from bowfin by the elongated anal fins and lack of a distinctive spot on the caudal peduncle (tail). Furthermore, bowfin have rounded heads with nasal tubercles.

Burbot resemble snakehead in overall body plan (long, low ambush predators) but can be easily identified by the split dorsal fin and barbels.

Native Range and Original Use

The Northern snakehead is native to China, Korea, and Russia. Snakehead, Northern snakeheads in particular, are a popular food item in some Asian countries and were originally imported to the U.S. for live food markets before the Lacey Act amendment in 2002 banned the importation of all *Channa* sp.

Habitat and Dispersion

In its native range, Northern snakehead are typically found in slow-moving, shallow wetlands, ponds, rivers, and channels. They are highly tolerant of poor conditions and are capable of breathing from the surface in poorly oxygenated waters. They are capable of surviving short periods out of the water and have been observed moving across wet, grassy areas to reach more suitable waters when their previous body of water dries up.

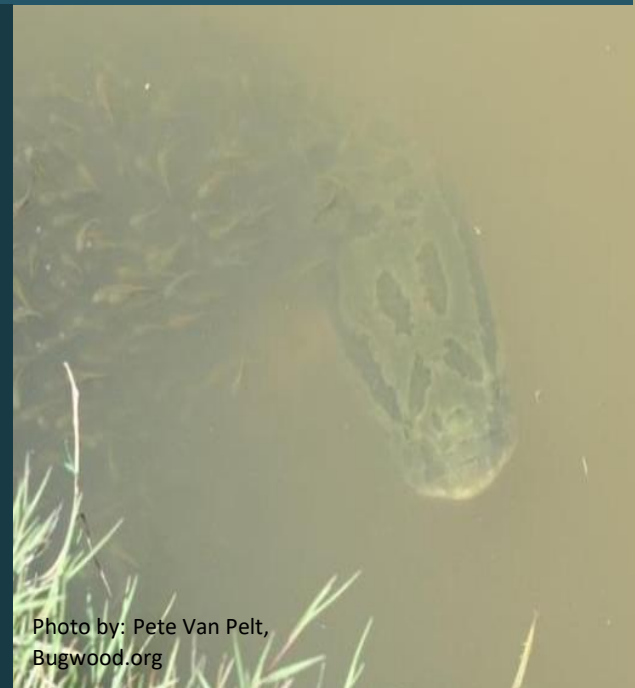


Photo by: Pete Van Pelt,
Bugwood.org



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Best Management Practice

Northern snakehead have been found in the main stem of the Delaware River and the Bashakill in the CRISP PRISM. If caught photograph it and report it to NYSDEC and iMapinvasive before disposing of it (do not just throw it up on land, they will survive). Snakehead make excellent food fish and fishers are encouraged to enjoy caught snakehead with some butter and lemon.

Source: <https://nas.er.usgs.gov/>

If you catch a snakehead, please contact

Sarah Coney at sconey@catskillcenter.org and report to NYSDEC and iMap

CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY!