

2017 Susquehanna River Invasive Catfish Study

Unfortunately, Maryland is now home to two non-native, invasive catfish species -- flathead catfish (*Pylodictis olivaris*) and blue catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*). Both of these species are native to the Mississippi River watershed and were recently introduced into the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Both species grow very large (more than 100 pounds) and are highly predatory in nature. As their numbers increase, they pose a serious threat to our native and naturalized fish populations. Because of this, we ask that anglers harvest any blue or flathead catfish they catch.

[Click Here](#) to learn more about invasive catfish species and how to identify them!

As many anglers are aware, the Susquehanna River above and below Conowingo Dam is now home to a growing number of flathead catfish. In cooperation with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Freshwater Fisheries Program have begun an assessment of their population within the Susquehanna River watershed. The assessment entails collecting flatheads above and below Conowingo Dam via hoop nets, electrofishing equipment and using fish caught by anglers. Total length, weight and stomach contents are recorded from each fish. Additionally, the otoliths (the fish's ear bone) from each fish is extracted and examined to determine the fish's age. We hope to learn much about their growth, life history, distribution, feeding habits and impacts to other species.



Flathead catfish collected in hoop nets.



Large fish are common.



Otoliths are removed to determine age.



Susquehanna flathead catfish



Removing otoliths from large flathead to determine age



Fisherman with heavy stringer of flathead catfish