

○ **American Eel**

Some people think an eel looks like a snake, but if you look closely you will see that it has fins. Adults are usually white or light-colored below and yellow to olive green above, but coloration is variable. If you have ever caught an eel on your fishing line, you know that it feels slimy. This slime coat protects the eel from disease. When an eel is caught on a fishing line, the stress felt by the eel results in an increase of this slime coat. Eels are commonly used as bait for crab traps, but sometimes are smoked and eaten. **Anglers are allowed to keep up to 25 eels per day, but none can be less than 9 inches long; eels can only be harvested between January 1 and August 31, unless fishing with a spear, trap or pot with which fishing is year-round.**



○ **Channel Catfish**

Channel catfish are members of the bullhead catfish family, Ictaluridae, and are a freshwater species that are commonly found in estuarine waters. Channel catfish are long slender fish with barbels on the chin that look like long black whiskers. There are four pairs of barbels around the mouth, two on the chin, one at the angle of the mouth, and one behind the nostril. Fresh baits such as peeler or soft crab, shrimp, squid, chicken liver, processed catfish bait, hot dogs and cut fish are good baits for catching channel catfish. **Channel catfish can be harvested at any size and any time of year.**



○ **Brown Bullhead**

Brown bullhead have gray, brown or black sides, sometimes with green or olive-gold. The belly is usually white or yellow and the fins, dark and sometimes black. The fish may be mottled or not. The most distinguishing feature of this fish is the barbels that surround the mouth. The barbels are long and brown or black, and are used like tongues to taste the environment around them. Like sunfishes and bass, brown bullhead build nests during spring with one or both parents performing egg-maintenance. Anglers catch them with a variety of tackle though they are not as commonly harvested as channel catfish. **Bullheads can be harvested at any size and any time of year.**



**BLACKWATER RIVER’S LIFE LIST CHALLENGE**

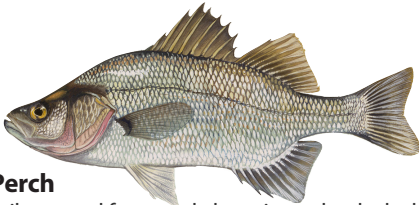
○ **Largemouth Bass**

Largemouth bass can be recognized by the lower jaw which extends past the back edge of the eye. It is dark green above with silvery sides and belly. A dark stripe runs across its body. This species is considered the most popular sport fish in the United States. Good baits for catching largemouth bass include live minnows, night crawlers, and a variety of artificial lures. While most anglers targeting largemouth bass practice catch-and-release, it remains a prized food fish for some. **Only five bass per day can be harvested per day, with none being under 12-inches throughout the year and none less than 15-inches between March 1 and June 15.**



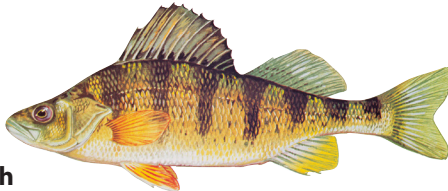
○ **White Perch**

These fish are silvery and frequently have irregular dusky longitudinal lines along its body. They have a slightly projecting lower jaw and small teeth. Their dorsal fins are separate and their anal fin possesses three strong spines. They are one of the most abundant fish in Chesapeake Bay and will spend their entire lives here. White perch is a very popular food fish. **Anglers can harvest as many as they want, year-round and at any size with a hook and line.**



○ **Yellow Perch**

The general coloring of yellow perch tends to be brassy green to golden yellow on their sides and white to yellow on their belly. Their most distinguishing feature is 6-8 dark vertical bands found across their back and sides. Recreational fishing for yellow perch is a very significant fishery in Maryland and has become a tradition for many anglers as the first fish to “arrive” in the rivers after the first of the year. During early spring, female yellow perch lay their eggs in long gelatinous strands, usually floating or hanging from vegetation or some other structure. **An angler can harvest up to ten per day, year-round, but none can be under 9 inches long.**



○ **Bluegill**

Bluegills have small mouths, an oval shaped body, often with a dark spot on their soft back fin. The fish is olive green on the upper body and light yellow on its belly. Young fish have lateral bars along the side of their body. The male picks a good spot and makes a nest. After the female lays her eggs, the male guards the eggs and newly hatched young. Bluegill is commonly the first fish caught by many new anglers because it is such a common species in freshwater and brackish waters. Anglers can catch bluegill using worms and light artificial tackle. **Bluegill can be harvested at any size and any time of year.**



○ **Pumpkinseed**

A common and beautiful species of sunfish, pumpkinseed has an olive colored black with blue lines and dark scales. Many scales are often colored bright orange or yellow. The breast and belly can be yellow, gold, or brassy orange. The “earflap” or flat extension of the operculum bone, is a noticeable feature of the species. It is mostly black but at its most terminal margin, a sliver of pale to bright orange distinguishes it. Anglers catch Pumpkinseed in sluggish waters, ponds, pools and backwaters of creeks or streams. The species can be caught in submerged grasses, wood or other forms of cover, from fresh or brackish water, and is one of the most widespread species of sunfish in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. **Pumpkinseed can be harvested at any size and any time of year.**



○ **Redbreast Sunfish**

Redbreast sunfish is a commonly caught sunfish of Blackwater River. The back of the fish is usually olive or brown, and the sides are spotted with orange or yellow-orange scales. The breast and belly shines a brightly colored orange-yellow (typical female) or deep red-orange (typical male). The species eats insects, crayfish, mollusks like snails, and sometimes fishes. Anglers catch them in ponds, pools and warm backwaters of streams and creeks. It seems somewhat intolerant of brackish water and tends to prefer truly freshwater areas of a watershed. **Redbreast sunfish can be harvested at any size and any time of year.**



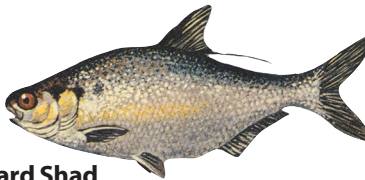
○ **Black Crappie**

Flecked with black and silver along its broad body, the black crappie is often caught by anglers in weedy, vegetated swamps, backwaters and ponds. They use fallen trees and stumps for protection and hunting grounds. Anglers catch them using light tackle, flies, and worms. Often considered a sweet meat by anglers, **black crappie can be harvested at any size and any time of year.**



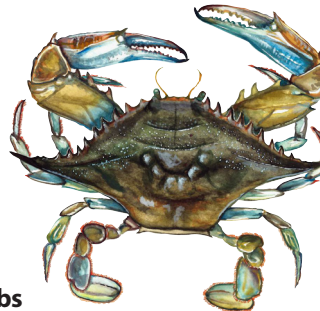
○ **Gizzard Shad**

Gizzard shad is characterized by their inferior, sub-terminal, toothless mouth and thick-walled, gizzard-like stomach. The last dorsal ray is formed into a long filament. As with other species of the genus *Dorosoma*, such as threadfin shad, the filament length varies greatly with age. Gizzard shad is an extremely important part of the ecosystem and is rarely eaten by humans. Young gizzard shad are good forage for predators. **Gizzard shad are used as bait and can be harvested in any number, any size at any time of the year.**



**Other Species**

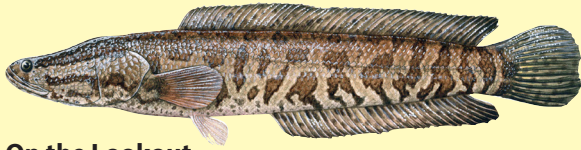
The freshwater marsh that includes Blackwater River and Little Blackwater River is home to many species of fish. Many of these are rarely seen by anglers. Juvenile river herring, hogchoker, Atlantic silverside, and eastern mudminnow are all examples of rarely-seen fishes of the marsh. Have you seen a species you don’t know? Send digital photos and descriptions to **fishingreports.dnr@maryland.gov**.



○ **Blue Crabs**

Maryland is famously home to striped bass, oysters and blue crabs. Of these, blue crabs get big and fat in “Lake” Blackwater, Little Blackwater, and the surrounding marsh. Not only important in the ecosystem, blue crab importantly takes center stage on the dinner table for many Marylanders. When not eaten steamed, the flavorful meat has been used to create crab cakes, dips, and stews. A Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Sport Fishing License is NOT required when fishing for blue crabs. Sometimes, however, a recreational crabbing license may be needed. **People who use handlines and dipnets, or those fishing from a boat with a crabbing boat decal, do not need a crabbing license. People who use other types of gear may be required to buy a crabbing license. People can harvest up to 24 male hard crabs and up to 12 soft crabs or male peeler crabs without a license.**





On the Lookout

Northern snakehead (*Channa argus*) was first reported in Maryland in 2002 and from the Blackwater Drainage, less than a decade later. Since then the species has become very abundant in Blackwater River and its marsh. The species is native to Asia. It can reach over 33 inches in length and tolerate a wide range of temperatures (32-85°F). This fish prefers stagnant shallow ponds, swamps, or slow moving streams and rivers with mud substrate and aquatic vegetation. Female snakeheads average about 40,000 eggs but can release up to 100,000 eggs and may spawn multiple times per year. Newly hatched larvae are protected by both parents until they reach the juvenile stage. Sexual maturity can be reached in two years when the total body length is about 12 inches.

**Environmental Concern:** The northern snakehead has been described as a voracious predator of fishes, freshwater crustaceans, and amphibians. Its native range and temperature tolerance indicates that northern snakehead populations could become established throughout most of the contiguous United States. Because of their feeding style, they could outcompete popular sport fish such as largemouth bass. Biologists are also concerned that they could introduce parasites and diseases that could harm native species.

**What is being done:** Unfortunately, northern snakeheads have invaded most tidal waters of Chesapeake Bay watershed. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, continue to conduct research to assess impacts on the ecosystem and effects of the snakehead introduction on fish populations. Learning about the biology and behavior of this fish will help biologists determine more efficient methods of removal and control.

**What you can do:** If you catch a northern snakehead, consider eating it or giving it to a neighbor or friend. As a food fish it has gained a very good reputation. Just remember that the fish must be dead at the moment you take possession. If the fish is in your cooler or on a stringer, make sure it's dead.

Regulations

Snakeheads can be harvested at any size using legal methods, during any season and in any number desired. A fishing license is required to fish for northern snakehead.

Important Information

To report a catch of an invasive species, please call: **877-620-8367** or **410-260-8300**

To report on illegal activity, please call: **443-433-4112**

To report an emergency or a dead marine mammal or sea turtle, please call the Natural Resources Police 24 hr. hotline: **800-628-9944**

To report an emergency on a boat use: **VHF-CH-16**

To report a fish kill, please call the Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Safety and Environmental 24 hr. hotline: **877-224-7229**

For any current fish consumption advisory, please call: **410-537-3906** or visit: **mde.state.md.us/programs/Marylander/fishandshellfish/Pages/fishconsumptionadvisory.aspx**

For a full list of regulations, please refer to the **Maryland Guide to Fishing and Crabbing** or go to: **eregulations.com/maryland/fishing/**

Maryland Department of Natural Resources  
Fishing and Boating Services  
Tawes State Office Building, 580 Taylor Avenue, B-2  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
410-260-8300 | 800-688-3467

Freshwater Program - Eastern Region  
Regional Manager: Brett Coakley 410-928-3643

**dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries**

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POCKET GUIDE  
TO  
FISHING  
BLACKWATER  
RIVER



You Have Arrived

Blackwater River has one of the last great freshwater wetlands of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. This freshwater wetland is famously home to formerly endangered Delmarva fox squirrels and the largest breeding population of bald eagles on the Atlantic Coast (north of Florida). But it is also home to a rich diversity of fishes. This is your guide to discover that biodiversity.

Ways to Discover Fish Diversity

Discover the biodiversity of the world's most species-rich vertebrate, fishes.

Hook-and-Line	Shoreline, bridge - popular spots
Cast Net	Practice your technique but remember the diameter of the net can't be more than 20 feet.
Fyke Net	Fyke nets are often used by watermen to help bring perch and catfish to a fish market or grocery store near you
Bow-and-Arrow	Can only be used for a few fishes, like carp or northern snakehead. Just be sure to get permission of everyone within 100 yards of you.
Jugs	Use for catfish but can only be used July 1 - February 28. Use up to ten with two hooks per line, and one line per jug.

A License to Discovery

To fish the Blackwater River, you will need a **Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Sport Fishing License**, unless you:

- 1) possess a valid commercial fishing license;
- 2) are fishing from a licensed charter boat or commercial fishing pier;
- 3) are fishing from a boat with a boat decal; or
- 4) fishing from your personal, private property. Money from fishing license sales support work to protect and to promote the Bay's fishing resources, now and for generations to come.

Residents - \$15/yr  
Non-Residents - \$22.50/yr  
*Allows access to all tidal waters. Funding from license sales directly help to protect the Chesapeake Bay.*

Add-Ons

Northern Snakehead Commercial Fishing License - \$15  
*(Allows commercial harvest of northern snakeheads with bowfishing gear or hook and line from tidal waters. Unless the harvester also holds a Seafood Dealer License, snakeheads harvested under this license must be sold to a licensed dealer)*

Unlimited Finfish Harvester License - (cost varies)  
Seafood Dealer License - \$50