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 or olive green above, but coloration is variable. If you have ever caught an eel, 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. 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.

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.

Pumpkinseed
A common and beautiful species of sunfish, pumpkinseed has an olive colored back 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 “ear flap” 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 silver 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, weeds 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.

Black Crappie
Fleeced 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.

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.

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Gizzard Shad
Gizzard shad is characterized by its 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.

Mattawoman Creek is home to many species of fish. Many of those are rarely seen by anglers. Juvenile river herring, hogchoker, Atlantic silverside, and goldfish are all examples of fishes that you might find in the creek. Have you seen a species that you don’t know? Send digital photos and descriptions to fishingreports.dnr@maryland.gov.

Other Species
Mattawoman Creek is home to many species of fish. Fishermen can target many species of fish throughout the year in Mattawoman Creek and Potomac River. Not only important in the ecosystem, blue crab important 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.

Blue Crabs
Maryland is famously home to striped bass, oysters and blue crabs. Of these, blue crabs get big and fat in Mattawoman Creek and Potomac River. 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.
Blue catfish (Ictalurus furcatus) was introduced to Virginia waters, where it spread into Maryland’s portion of Chesapeake Bay watershed. The species natively lives in the Mississippi River, Missouri River, and Ohio River basins. The species is encountered in freshwater and brackish water and lives in major river channels and backwaters of large rivers, like Mattawoman Creek. Blue catfish can now be found in deep channels of several major rivers of Chesapeake Bay, including ones with silted bottoms. During winter, individuals retreat to deeper water and during spring, move into sloughs and backwaters.

Environmental Concern: Blue catfish and northern snakehead have been described as voracious predators of fishes and crustaceans, like crabs and crayfish. Because of their feeding style, they could outcompete popular sport fish or depress populations of prey species. Biologists are also concerned that they could spread parasites and diseases that could harm native species.

What is being done: Both species are widespread in tidal waters of Chesapeake Bay. Agencies continue to conduct research to assess impacts of these species in the ecosystem. Learning about the biology and behavior of the species will help biologists determine more efficient methods of removal and control.

Fishing: Anglers catch catfish by sinking worms and stinky baits around docks and deeper water, and also along ripraps or bulkheads. Catfish have spines so be careful when handling the fish and dehooking. Northern snakeheads are caught using a lot of the same methods anglers use to catch largemouth bass. These include casting artificial baits, like worms and creature baits, around docks and deeper water, and also along riprap or bulkheads. Catfish have spines so be careful when handling the fish and dehooking. 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.

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

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

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04/2020 DNR 17-121018-110

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