

Northern Snakehead Frequently Asked Questions Fishing Information



Are snakehead easy to catch? Yes. Snakeheads can have large populations and can be targeted in a variety of ways with a variety of bait/tackle. Check out our how-to-target video/information, ask the professionals at tackle shops, or find tips and tricks online or through social media.

Where can I catch them? It can depend on the season and time of day, but usually freshwater and marshy areas, along shorelines in water less than six feet deep. The department has several tools for anglers including: an Angler's Log with searchable reports of where snakeheads are being caught, a public access map that highlights places to fish for snakeheads and a weekly fishing report.

What specifically are Maryland regulations? Anglers targeting snakehead must possess a valid Maryland fishing license but there are no seasons, no size limits and no creel limits. Harvested snakehead must be killed immediately after being caught if there is intent to keep the fish. Possession and/or transport of live snakehead is illegal under state and federal law. If the angler does not intend on keep the fish, they may release it but must do so, immediately.

Are Snakehead fishing regulations in Maryland different than those in other states? No. Some of the terminology is different but live possession is illegal in all impacted states and live import from other countries is illegal.

Are snakehead safe to eat? Yes. Northern snakehead (*Channa argus*) are both nutritious and delicious. Studies routinely demonstrate that snakehead muscle contains insignificant levels of contaminants that are harmful to humans. Once filleted, their meat is similar to any flaky white fish such as halibut, haddock, whiting, or even striped bass (rockfish).

Are there worms in the fish? Potentially. Nearly any fish species can harbor intramuscular worms. Cutting the worms out is easy enough and they're even safe to eat if cooked completely.

Do I have to kill every snakehead I catch? No. Persons wishing to release a live snakehead may do so provided it is immediate and directly back into the waters from which it came. For those willing, we actively encourage the targeting and harvest of every snakehead caught.

Should snakehead be treated like other sportfish with seasons and limits? No. Snakeheads are an invasive species that can negatively impact native fishes here and across the country. Because of ongoing research, the department, along with its many colleagues, continue to categorize the fish as invasive, nuisance or injurious. Many of the properties that support those classifications will, unfortunately, allow the species to persist in Maryland, likely without any need of conservation strategies