

CATFISH (family Ictaluridae)

Black bullhead

Ameiurus melas



Similar Species: Brown bullhead and yellow bullhead

Identification: Dusky or black chin barbels (whiskers) (yellow bullhead has pale chin barbels). Brown and black bullheads are difficult to tell apart; however, brown bullheads have more sharply serrated spines than black bullheads.

Black bullheads are the most common bullhead species in South Dakota and are found throughout the state. They feed primarily on insects and fish (live or dead), but also graze on plant material. They are abundant in most natural lakes and in some man-made lakes and ponds. In rivers, black bullheads are common in backwaters and sloughs and rare in flowing water. Black bullheads are nest builders and spawn in May or June when water temperature is around 70 F.

They are a popular game fish and can often reach 2 pounds or more, but they overpopulate and stunt in certain waters.

