

Brown bullhead catfish

Italuridae - *Ameiurus nebulosus*



What does it look like?

Brown bullhead catfish are a freshwater exotic fish, dark brown to olive green in colour with paler sides and bellies. They have 8 distinctive barbels around the mouth, small eyes and smooth, scaleless skin. The leading edge on their dorsal and pectoral fins has a sharp toxic spine. They commonly grow to 250-500mm long, and live for 5-8 years. Catfish form pair-bonds and are territorial during the preparation of the spawning site and during spawning. Spawning occurs in shallow depressions in bottom mud or sand. In New Zealand/Aotearoa catfish mature at 2-years old and are able to spawn for the next 4-5 years. They are one of the few freshwater fish species that provide parental care of their broods, significantly increasing offspring survival and mainly nocturnal.

Lakes and slow-moving water bodies including streams and drainage channels are favoured areas along with submerged vegetation. Spatial use of habitats within an invaded water body can vary seasonally to meet changing spawning and/or food requirements. They have broad environmental tolerances including very low dissolved oxygen levels.

Why is it a problem?

Brown bullhead catfish are an invasive species. They are a very tolerant species, surviving in poor water quality and will stay alive out of the water for a period of time. Catfish are a predator species and will dominate native species. They are opportunistic generalist feeders eating a wide range of food from insects to native fish species.

Control methods

Please contact Council's biosecurity team if you believe you have encountered this pest species.

More information

Similar Species: There are no similar species of fish known in New Zealand/Aotearoa.

Management programme

- Exclusion

Rules

- Not known to be present within the Gisborne/Tairāwhiti region, however, if this species were to become established this will be a priority for Council's Biosecurity. For more information about this Rule, refer to our Regional Pest Management Plan page 17, under Related Links.
- No person will transport or have possession of this unwanted organism into or around the East Coast/Tairāwhiti Region.