General facts

The channel catfish is the largest member of the catfish family found in New Jersey. Stocked in 90 waterbodies throughout the state, they can be found in the Delaware River plus large lakes and small urban ponds. Channel catfish are generally bottom feeders, consuming nearly all aquatic life-forms including fish, insects and crustaceans. They feed mostly at night, using their barbels and sense of taste to locate food.

Seasonality

During the winter, channel catfish are highly concentrated in deep water, lying almost dormant. Their activity increases as water temperatures reach 50º F. At 60º F, channels leave their wintering locations in search of food and will bite readily. Spawning begins when days become longer and water temperatures reaches 75º F. Prime fishing occurs during the summer months where channel catfish can be caught 24 hours-a-day with nighttime being the most productive fishing period.

Gear:

- Fishing Rod – 7 ft. medium action
- Line — 10 to 15 lb. test monofilament

Key fishing areas:

- Assunpink Lake, Cooper River Lake, Furnace Lake, Lake Hopatcong, Manasquan Reservoir, Mary Elmer Lake, Rising Sun Lake, Spruce Run Reservoir, Stone Tavern Lake and the Delaware River.

Size:

- Adults typically range from 2 to 3 lbs.; however, fish over 5 lbs. are common.

Skillful Angler Award (min. size):

- Adult: 10 lbs., 8 oz.
- Junior: 8 lbs.
- Catch & Release: 35 in.

State Record:

- 33 lbs., 3 oz., Lake Hopatcong (1978)


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