

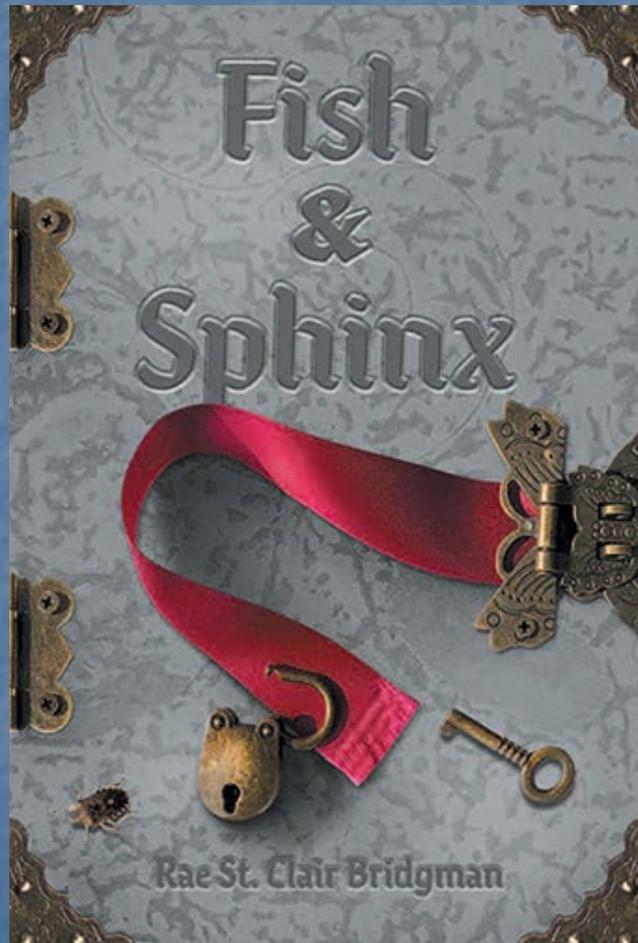
# CATFISH!

Meet Catfishes Around the World

Rae Bridgman

[www.raebridgman.com](http://www.raebridgman.com)

# Fish & Sphinx



Wil Wychwood's magical medallion weighs heavily on him. For once, he would just like to live a normal life. Tired of bearing the burden of the Serpent's Chain secret society, he plans to toss the medallion into the rising river waters. But when mists reveal a new mystery, cousins Wil and Sophie tumble into the secret realm of Catfysh, the Spirit of the River, and a plot to destroy the most magical building in Canada.

# Catfysh

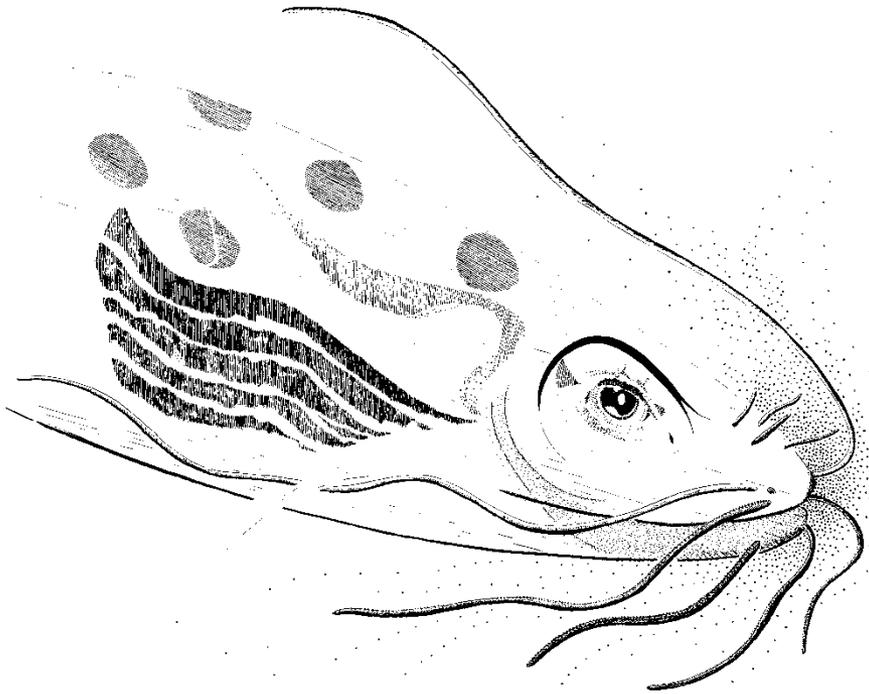


Illustration of catfish © 2010 Rae Bridgman

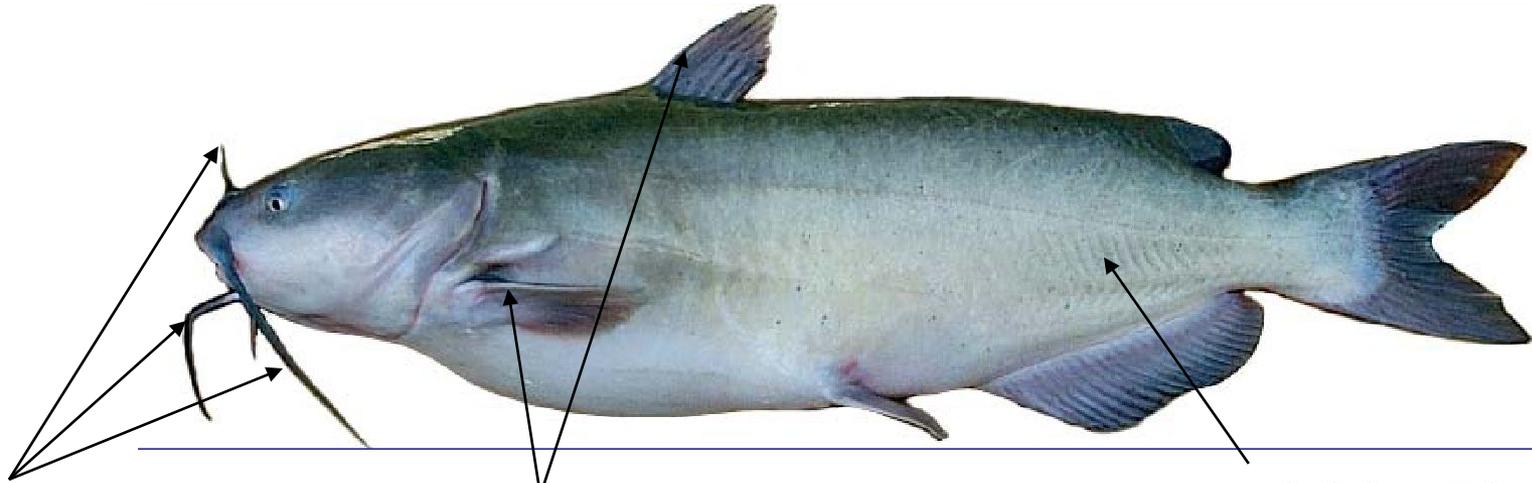
*“The fog swirled around the children, holding them close. A splash by the river startled them both and they turned to see what it was. There, standing before them, was a woman wearing a long, silvery robe. Her hair was matted and whiskers trailed from her chin. But it was her eyes that were the most startling. Pale and wide-set, they glimmered like two moons” [from *Fish & Sphinx*, by Rae Bridgman]*

# DID YOU KNOW?

There are 34 families and about 2400 species of catfish in the world. Only one family, the North American Freshwater Catfishes, Family *Ictaluridae*, is found in Canada.

- Catfish vary from less than 5cm long to almost 5m long  
The largest strictly freshwater fish in the world is a catfish.
- Catfish use their swim bladders as eardrums, and can taste with their belly and whiskers (barbels).
- Most catfish have a spine at the leading edge of the dorsal and each pectoral fin, and can inflict a painful sting. A few are dangerously venomous. The sting of an Australian catfish can be *fatal*, and a family of South American Catfishes are parasitic on other fish.

# BASIC CATFISH STRUCTURE



BARBELS

SPINES

NO SCALES

(WHISKERS)



BONY PLATES

# Manitoba's Catfishes



black bullhead, *Ameiurus melas*



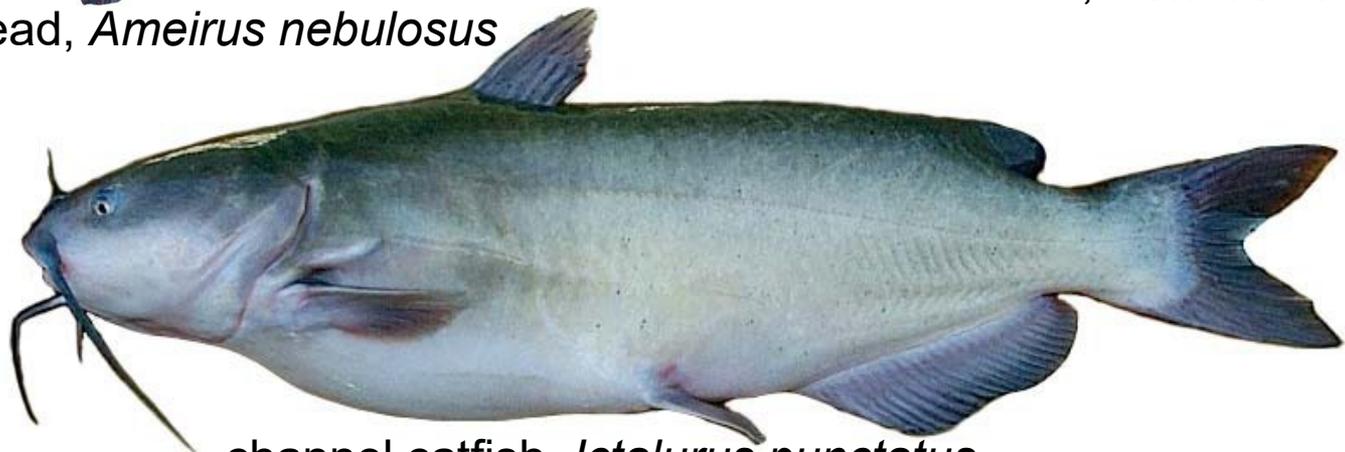
tadpole madtom, *Noturus gyrinus* (venomous)



brown bullhead, *Ameiurus nebulosus*

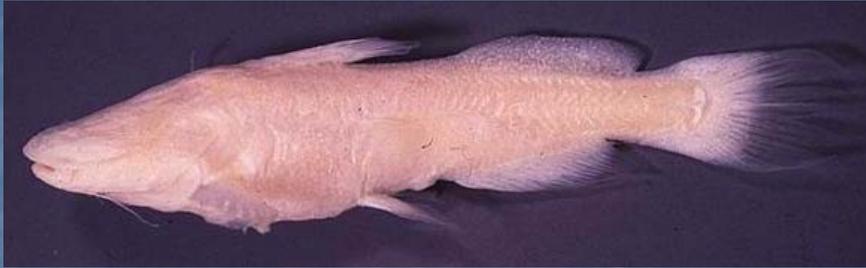


stonecat, *Noturus flavus*



channel catfish, *Ictalurus punctatus*

# CAVE-DWELLING ICTALURIDS



**Widemouth blindcat, *Satan eurystomus*, known from 5 artesian wells near San Antonio, Texas, USA**



**Texas blindcat, *Troglolganis pattersoni*, known from 5 artesian wells near San Antonio, Texas, USA**



**Mexican blindcat, *Prietella phreatophila*, known only from wells near Sierra de Santa Rosa, Coahuila, Mexico**

# **THE LARGEST CATFISHES**

## **NORTH AMERICA**

The largest North American Catfish, the blue catfish, *Ictalurus furcatus*. Up to about 1.7 m, and about 70 kg. Mississippi / Missouri / Ohio Basin, south to Guatemala





**Flathead catfish, *Pylodictis olivaris*.** Up to about 1.6 m, and 56 kg. North America, from Lake Erie, through Mississippi / Ohio / Missouri Basin and Gulf Coast. North American Freshwater Catfishes, Family *Ictaluridae*

## Flathead Catfish or Internet Hoax?



# It's a hoax!

The photo on the previous slide is actually an internet hoax. Flathead catfish are native to the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio river systems, and the Southern Atlantic and Gulf Coastal drainages in the U.S.A.

In the south, people catch nest-guarding males by wading or swimming along cut banks on river shorelines, and feeling for a fish in the cavities under the banks. When they feel one, they grab it in the gill openings and wrestle it aboard a boat. Flathead cats grow to just over 50 kg.

The fish in the picture is a *wells catfish*, a Eurasian species growing to approx. 250 kg. Apparently, they too like cavities in cut banks, and Europeans catch them in the same way as Americans catch flathead catfish.

Several years ago, there were a number of pictures of wells catfish on the internet and in the newspapers that were (wrongly) alleged to be world record flathead cats. The picture in the previous slide was one of those circulated on the internet that was supposed to be a record flathead cat.

# **NORTHWESTERN ASIA**



**Wels catfish: World's largest catfish, *Silurus glanis*.** Grows to a length of about 4.75 m, and a weight of about 250 kg. Found in Eurasia from the Aral Sea to the upper Danube River, and introduced west to Britain. Sheatfishes, Family Siluridae

[Source: <http://xvella.free.fr/photos/00000713.jpg>>. Date accessed: 30 January 2010]

# SOUTHEASTERN ASIA

**World's largest strictly freshwater fish, Mekong Giant Catfish, *Pangasianodon gigas*, Up to 3 m. long, and 350 kg. Shark Catfishes, Family Pangasiidae. Juveniles have pads of small teeth on their jaws and feed on aquatic insects. The teeth are lost as they grow, and larger fish feed only on algae.**



# Mekong Giant Catfish

This fish was caught on May 1, 2005 from the Mekong River in Thailand. It was 2.7 m long, and weighed 393 kg.

[Source: <<http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/anglers-catch-293kg-monster-fish/2005/06/30/1119724729978.html>>. Accessed 30 January 2010.]



**Sutchi catfish, *Pangasius hypophthalmus*.** Aquacultured sutchi catfish are sold as frozen fillets

[Source: [http://fishbase.ifm-geomar.de/Summary/speciesSummary.php?id=14154&lang=portuguese\\_po](http://fishbase.ifm-geomar.de/Summary/speciesSummary.php?id=14154&lang=portuguese_po)>. Accessed 30 January 2009.]



# INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

**Goonch, *Bagarius yarrelli*, Length to about 2 m. Indus and Ganges basins, India. Sisorid catfishes, Family Sisoridae**



**North African catfish, *Clarias gariepinus*.** Most of Africa and adjacent Middle East. Grows to about 1.7 m and 60 kg. Air breathing catfishes, Family *Clariidae*



# **SOUTH AMERICA**



**Kumakuma or Paraiba catfish, *Brachyplatystoma filamentosum*, to 3.6m long and 200kg. South America, Amazon and Orinoco Basins. Long-Whiskered Catfishes, Family *Pimelodidae***

# MARINE CATFISHES

[www.raebridgman.ca](http://www.raebridgman.ca)

**Gafftopsail Catfish, *Bagre marinus*.** Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean to northern South America. Up to 60cm and 4.5kg. Sea Catfishes Family *Ariidae*



**ARMoured CATFISHES of  
SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA**



Suckermouth  
armoured catfishes,  
*Loricariidae*



Thorny catfishes,  
*Doradidae*



Callichthyid  
armoured catfishes,  
*Callichthyidae*

**CATFISHES**  
**with**  
**NASTY SUPRISES**



Tadpole madtom, venomous,  
Manitoba



Striped eel catfish, venomous  
(lethal), marine, Indo-Pacific



Electric catfish,  
electrogenic, most  
of tropical Africa



Candiru, parasitic, Amazon  
& Orinoco basins, South  
America



# Acknowledgements

My thanks to Ken Stewart for having granted permission to use material he collected for a presentation about catfish for CATFISH! Many of the images were drawn from the internet; I have cited relevant URLs, where these were available.

Dr. Kenneth Stewart (1936-2011), herpetologist and ichthyologist, was Professor Emeritus of Zoology at the University of Manitoba, and a nationally recognized expert on freshwater fish. He was co-author (with Douglas Watkinson) of *The Freshwater Fishes of Manitoba* (U of M Press, 2004).