Blue Catfish in Virginia
Historical Perspective & Importance to Recreational Fishing

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Blue Catfish Introductions to James River & Rappahannock River 1973 - 1977
Blue Catfish Introduced to Mattaponi River in 1985
Followed by Colonization of the Pamunkey River
Blue Catfish Established in Potomac River – Date?
Confirmed in Piankatank River – 2002
Blue Catfish Now Occur in all Major Virginia Tributaries of Chesapeake Bay
Stocking in Virginia

- Provide recreational and food value to anglers
- Traditional Fisheries Management => Stocking
- Other species introduced to Virginia tidal rivers:
  - Channel Catfish,
  - Largemouth Bass,
  - Smallmouth Bass,
  - Common carp, ....

Blue catfish aside, as of mid-1990’s freshwater fish community in Virginia tidal waters dominated by introduced species.
Important Recreational Fisheries

- Key factors determining this “success”
  - Strong recruitment and good survival leading to very high abundance
  - Trophy fishery dependant on rapid growth and good survival
Angler Awards For Blue Catfish >50 Pounds
Tidal James River

Year

Number of Citations
0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 180 200

Legend:
- > 90 lb.
- > 80 lb.
- > 70 lb.
- > 60 lb.
- > 50 lb.
Anglers have come to expect ten pound increment increases in the upper end of catches every 3-4 years

2004
83 pounds
(~37.6 kg)
2006
94 pounds
(≈ 42.6kg)
2009
102 pounds
(~ 46.4 kg)
Recreational Fishery

– Tidal James is a world class blue catfish fishery
– Total economic value has not been quantified
  • In 2002, an angler survey conducted March – November
    found anglers direct expenditures totaled $1.6 million
      » Hotels, Restaurants, Guides,...
      – Estimated $2.6 million economic value of recreational
        catfish fishery during the survey period
    – Survey did not capture night fishing,
    – Was not conducted during December – February,
      important months for trophy blue catfish angling

– This fishery has grown substantially since 2002
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