

# Eating Blue Catfish Is Tasty and Good for the Chesapeake Bay!

Since people first put blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay decades ago, these fish—which come from rivers in the middle of the United States—**have dramatically increased in number**. Blue catfish produce high numbers of eggs, and therefore, lots more blue catfish. And while they prefer fresh water, they are not picky about where they live, so they have expanded their range to live in most of the major rivers that flow into the Chesapeake Bay.

Many recreational anglers like to catch these fish, which can grow to five feet and 100 pounds or even larger, as they are a challenge to reel in. But blue catfish are voracious eaters, consuming plants, insects, blue crabs—and even other fish. And they have few natural predators (other than human fishermen!). That poses a challenge for other kinds of fish, who need the food blue catfish are devouring to be *their* food. In fact, in many Chesapeake rivers, **blue catfish pose a significant threat to other kinds of fish**.

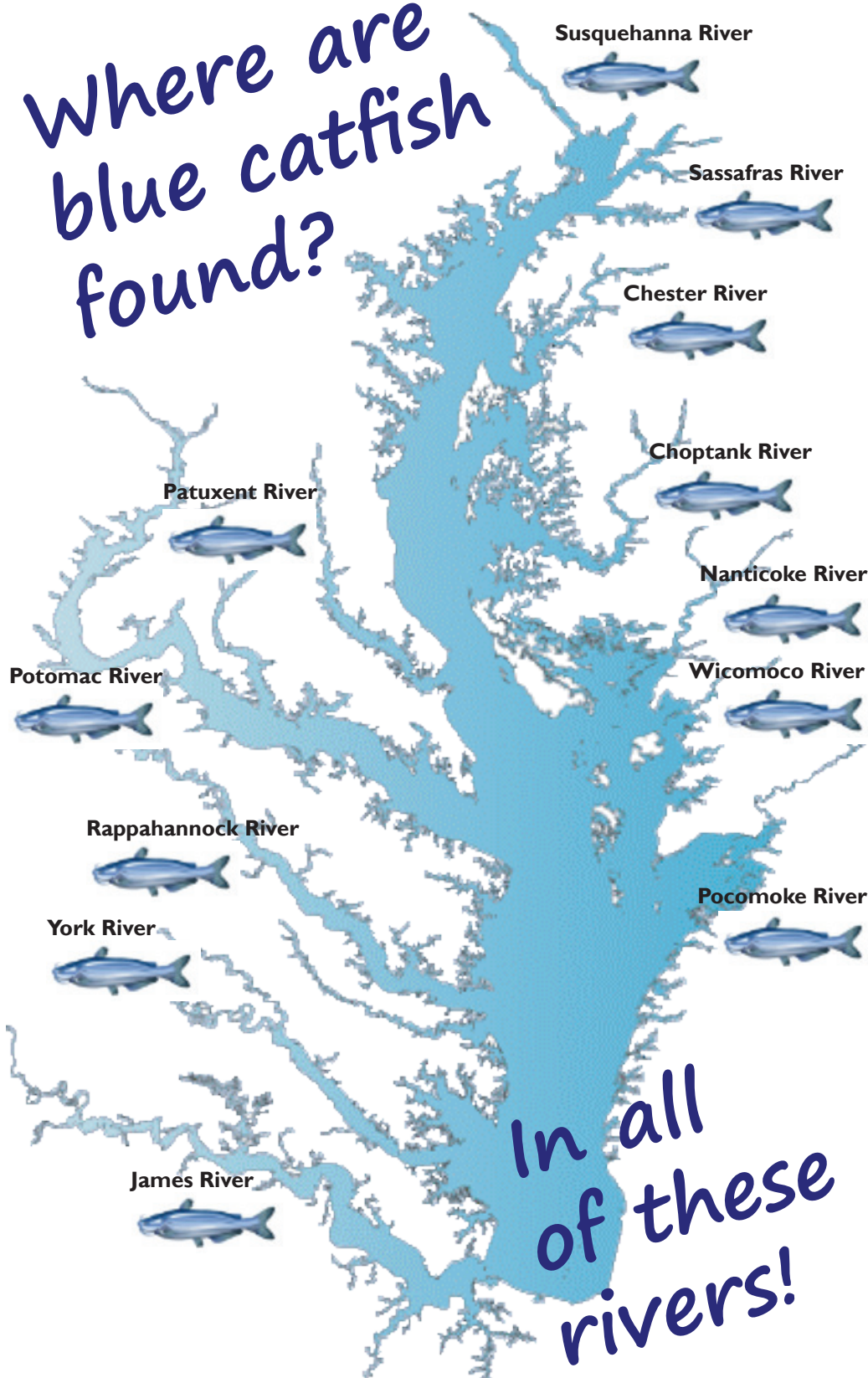


Lucky for us humans, **blue catfish are tasty to eat**—many people say they taste like rockfish. Because they are available in such impressive numbers, in recent years, fishermen around the Bay have started catching blue catfish in order to sell them to seafood and grocery stores, as well as to restaurants. Catching and eating blue catfish is one way to reduce numbers of these invasive fish in our Bay.



Blue catfish can live for up to 20 years. Over that time, they can accumulate dangerous amounts of contaminants in their bodies. To make sure that fish you eat are safe, **only eat blue catfish that are less than 30 inches long**. Research shows that those fish are young enough to be healthy for people to eat. Blue catfish sold in stores and restaurants follows this rule.

Where are  
blue catfish  
found?



Since people first put blue catfish into the James, Rappahannock, and York Rivers in the 1970s and 1980s for recreational fishing, **blue catfish have expanded into most Chesapeake Bay rivers.**

To learn more about blue catfish biology, how quickly they grow, where they live, what they eat, and how they are affecting our Chesapeake Bay and other species that live here, the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office has funded research on these fish.

Because research is still in progress, a symposium in early November 2017 will bring together scientists studying these catfish so they can share and learn from each other's research.

This research is used by resource managers as they make decisions on how best to handle the blue catfish population in the Chesapeake Bay.



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