# [Catfish](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/catfish/" \o "Catfish):

# Catfish are a [group](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-group) of bottom-feeding [fish](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/fish/) that are found in [freshwater](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/freshwater/) [habitats](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/habitats/) and coastal regions on and around every continent in the world with the exception of [Antarctica](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/location/antarctica/). Catfish are most easily identified by their flattened broad heads and the long whisker-like barbels that protrude from the mouth of the catfish. The long barbels of the catfish contain the taste buds of the catfish and so are often most commonly used for smelling and therefore sensing what is about to eat (and to hide from) in the surrounding waters. Despite the name however, not all catfish [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) have prominent whisker-like barbels. There are nearly 3,000 known [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) of catfish in the world but it is thought that the actual number of catfish [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) could be as high as 4,500 as many [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) of catfish are found in areas where there is little or no [human](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/human/) contact. Although catfish can generally be found in faster-flowing rivers and streams, some catfish [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) have adapted to living in shallow salt-water [environments](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-environment) while other catfish [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) live their lives in caves underground. The average catfish is around a meter in length usually slightly less depending on the [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species). Catfish however can range in [size](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-size) from just a centimetre in length to more than two meters long. The largest [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) of catfish is the Mekong catfish, which is found inhabiting parts of the Mekong river that flows through Laos, [Thailand](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/location/asia/thailand/), [Cambodia](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/location/asia/cambodia/) and [Vietnam](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/location/asia/vietnam/). The largest Mekong catfish ever found measured nearly 3 meters in length. Catfish generally have a carnivorous [diet](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/diet/), although the tiny catfish [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) have been known to ingest small aquatic plants. Catfish tend to feed on [fish](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/fish/), [insects](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/insect/) and worms that dwell close to the river bed, along with amphibians such as [frogs](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/frog/) and [newts](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/newt/) and occasionally small [reptiles](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-reptile) and mammals. Due to the wide diversity and range of the catfish, the catfish has numerous [predators](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-predators) all around the world. Large [fish](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/fish/), amphibians, [reptiles](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-reptile), [mammals](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-mammal) and even [birds](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/bird/) all [prey](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-prey) on the 3,000 different catfish species. Female catfish spawn (lay their eggs) close to the surface of the water where they are safe from other bottom-dwelling aquatic [animals](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal). Female catfish lay between 10 and 90 little eggs at a time which hatch in less than a week.

# Catfish Facts:

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| [Kingdom](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-kingdom): | Animalia |
| [Phylum](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-phylum): | Chordata |
| [Class](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-class): | Osteichthyes |
| [Order](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-order): | Siluriformes |
|  | |
| [Scientific Name](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-scientific-name): | Siluriformes |
| [Origin](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-origin): | Warm freshwater |
| [Diet](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-diet): | Carnivore |
| [Size (L)](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-size): | 1cm - 270cm (0.4in - 106in) |
| [Water Type](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-water-type): | Fresh |
| [Optimum pH Level](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-optimum-ph-level): | 6.5 - 8.0 |
| [Lifespan](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-lifespan): | 8 - 20 years |
| [Conservation Status](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-conservation-status): | Threatened |
|  | |
| [Colour](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-colour): | Brown, Black, Yellow, White, Tan, Grey |
| [Skin Type](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-skin-type): | Scales |
| [Favourite Food](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-favourite-food): | Fish |
| [Habitat](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-habitat): | Fast-flowing rivers and lakes |
| [Average Clutch Size](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-average-clutch-size): | 40 |
| [Main Prey](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-prey): | Fish, Frogs, Worms |
| [Predators](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-predators): | Large Fish, Birds, Mammals, Reptiles |
| [Distinctive Features](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-distinctive-features): | Flat, broad head and whiskers |