

Alert !

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- online: <https://irecord.org.uk/>
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Black bullhead

Scientific name: *Ameiurus melas*

Also known as: Black bullhead catfish

Native to: Mexico, Eastern United States, South-east Canada

Habitat: Can survive in a range of waters, including those which are low in oxygen, brackish, turbid and/or very warm.

A small (c. 30cm long) freshwater catfish. Not related to native bullheads.

Several historic records in Great Britain (GB) but the only known established population (in Essex) was eradicated in 2014. May impact on a range of invertebrates, plants and smaller fish through predation and competition. Potential vector for parasites, bacteria and viruses and could be a nuisance species for anglers. It is illegal to release black bullhead in GB, for details of legislation visit:

www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation.



United States Fish and Wildlife Services

Key ID Features

Can grow up to 45 cm long but most specimens found in GB have been 10-18 cm long (up to 20 cm). Variable in colour, top of body green, yellow, brown or grey olive, underside bright yellow to milk white.

4 pairs of barbels. Chin barbels dark grey or black



National Fisheries Laboratory, Environment Agency

Head large and rounded above



Emöke Dénes CC BY-SA 4.0

Adipose fin short and free at posterior end



National Fisheries Laboratory, Environment Agency

Area between head and dorsal fin is compressible. No bony ridge.

Anal fins do not reach caudal (tail) fin, and usually have 17-21 rays

Pectoral fin barbs point towards the head when fins are closed against the body

Similar Species

Often misidentified as the brown bullhead *A. nebulosus*. In GB, all *Ameiurus* should currently be considered *A. melas*, with records of *A. nebulosus* seemingly erroneous. May also be confused with the stone loach *Barbatula barbatula* and Wels catfish *Silurus glanis* but both species can be distinguished by the number of pairs of barbels around the mouth.

Brown bullhead Non-native *Ameiurus nebulosus*

Head and body – yellow-brown, olive or grey, sides often mottled with vague brown blotches

Spines on dorsal and pectoral fins

Noel Burkhead, CC BY-SA 2.5



Pectoral fin barbs point towards the tail when fins are closed against body

Belly and underside pale yellow or white

4 pairs of barbels

Small protruding eyes

Chin barbels white or grey at base

Generally has 21-24 rays on anal fin

Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, CC BY-SA 2.0

Stone loach Native *Barbatula barbatula*

Grows to around 13 cm but usually much smaller.

Michal Mañas, CC BY 3.0

Elongated body, mottled olive or greenish-olive in colour

Very small eye

Tail fin square cut or slightly concave

3 pairs of barbels around mouth

Wels catfish Non-native *Silurus glanis*

Grows up to 5 m, but commonly 3 m.

National Fisheries Laboratory, Environment Agency

Anal fin around half the body length

3 pairs of barbels around mouth

Further information:

- <https://www.nonnativespecies.org/non-native-species/information-portal/view/179>
- <https://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/NIEA-ID-Guide-ISNI-website-Ameiurus-nebulosus-Brown-Bullhead-CatfishV2-1.pdf>
- <https://species.nbnatlas.org/species/NHMSYS0000544615>
- <https://www.cabidigitallibrary.org/doi/full/10.1079/cabicompendum.94466>