

BROWN BULLHEAD

(*Ictalurus nebulosus*)

Oneida Lake Status:
Abundant

- A favorite food fish in central New York
- Bury themselves in mud during the winter
- Found in most Oneida Lake habitats

The brown bullhead is a member of the catfish family, and is a medium sized fish with a typical catfish look. In Oneida Lake, brown bullhead may reach 18 inches in length, and can weigh more than 2 pounds. They have broad, flat heads, and dark whiskers

(barbels) around the mouth (see photo below). The brown bullhead typically has a dark brown back with a yellow or white belly, though its coloration will vary depending on its habitat. A

square tail and spotted side coloration distinguishes this fish from other catfish species.

Brown bullheads are a hardy fish, and tolerate high temperatures and low oxygen levels. During the cold central New York winters, bullheads survive by burying themselves in the mud with only their mouths showing. In Oneida Lake, they are found in habitats with or without vegetation and can be found over both mud and gravel bottoms. Here, they eat a diet of sunfish, yellow perch, zebra mussels, amphipods, and other invertebrates.

Oneida Lake anglers catch brown bullhead by the bucketful each spring, and bullhead is a delicious fish to eat. Spring brown bullhead is a favorite meal of many Oneida Lakers.



Brown bullhead in its natural habitat:
<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/gallery/descript/LongnoseGar/bullhead.jpg>



Brown bullhead angling is common on Oneida Lake:



Detail drawing of a brown bullhead



The bullhead's barbels are a common trait of catfish:
<http://www.assabriver.org/streamwatch/fishphotos/BrownBullhead1BBa.jpg>

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