

# A Preliminary Look at Age and Growth for Three Catfish Species in the Middle Ohio River

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*Abstract:* Catfish in the Ohio River have been a target of commercial fishers for years and are increasingly being sought by hook and line enthusiasts as well. Because of this growing popularity, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife began looking at age and growth of channel, blue, and flathead catfish in 2004. Capture methods included obtaining fish from sport anglers and using hoop nets, trotlines, and electrofishing. By 2007, otoliths from nearly 1,000 catfish have been examined. Of the three species of catfish present in the Ohio River, blue catfish grows the fastest followed by flathead catfish. However, there is considerable variability in fish length and weight for the same aged catfish. Differences in growth also exist between male and female catfish for two of the three species. Blue and flathead catfish males and females grow at similar rates up to approximately 34–36 inches. After that point male growth in length and weight surpass females in both species. The oldest blue and flathead catfish aged from the Ohio River were 24 and 31 years, respectively. Both sexes of channel catfish (oldest age 16 years) seem to grow at similar rates; however, males still appear to grow to the longest lengths. This information will be used to help insure that high quality catfish populations continue to exist in the Ohio River for both commercial and sport fishermen for years to come.

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