

RIVER MONSTERS

High water could bring improved catfish action

BY JOHN N. FELSHER

Flood conditions in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta and other rivers during the fall and winter messed up fishing, but high waters could actually improve fishing over the long term.

"In high water, fish find better cover and more places to feed and spawn," explained Dave Armstrong, an Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division biologist in Spanish Fort. "A good spawn means more fish to catch down the road. High water is good for catfish. When water starts falling, that's a good time to catch catfish."

Catfish thrive in muddy rivers. With thousands of taste buds in its skin, about

5,000 per square centimeter, a catfish swims through the water like a giant tongue tasting everything. It can detect food particles or odors down to one part in 10 billion parts of water even in the darkest, murkiest conditions.

All of the major streams in the Alabama, Tombigbee and the Mobile systems can provide outstanding catfish action. The rivers frequently give up 40- to 60-pound blue cats, flatheads topping 50 pounds and abundant channel cats. The rivers carry nutrients that feed a rich, healthy system. Big cats munch on shad, bluegills and other fish plus many

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Photo by John N. Felsher

Joe Dunn shows off a blue catfish he caught while fishing on Millers Ferry Reservoir near Millers Ferry, Ala.

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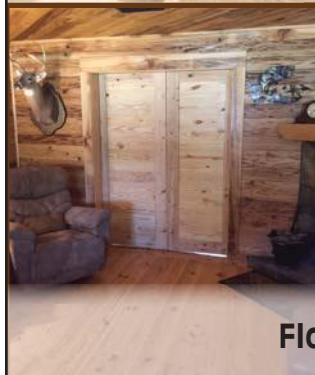
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