

CHANNEL CATFISH: Smelly bait often works the best

FROM PAGE 15

catfish swims through the water like a giant tongue, tasting everything. Sensors can perceive odors down to one part in 10 billion parts of water, so catfish can detect minute food particles or scents over long distances. With excellent sensory systems, channel catfish miss few opportunities to grab a tempting morsel and eat almost anything. Some excellent baits include shrimp, nightcrawlers, minnows, fish pieces, clams, dough balls, crawfish, cheese, livers, gizzards, commercial stink or blood baits and even such odd items as soap among other things.

"In general, the more it smells, the better channel cats bite it," Barton explained. "A glob of shad guts is my favorite bait. I also use chicken livers, slightly spoiled shrimp, cut bait and nightcrawlers. I also use Secret 7 or Sudden Impact, a fiber bait fished on a Furry Thang bait holder over a 2/0 or 3/0 hook."

Countless people catch channel cats with perhaps the simplest forms of fishing. They dangle nightcrawlers, shrimp or other baits from bobbers, tossed next

to cover and wait for the floats to disappear. Others remove the bobber, add a sinker to pull the bait to the bottom and wait for something to tug on the line.

Of course, the old methods still work, but anglers can catch cats many different ways. For fishing sloping shorelines or other deep structure not directly under the boat, try a slip-float rig. With a slip-float rig, a small weight pulls the line through an eye on the float. A stopper keeps the line from slipping too far, allowing the bait to suspend at the desired depth. With a slip-float rig, an angler can make a natural vertical presentation without sitting on top of the structure or fish, thus keeping the bait in the strike zone longer. Experiment with different depths.

"With a slip-float rig, I primarily fish deeper ledges, humps or rock piles where I want to suspend my baits just off the bottom," Barton explained. "I typically try to position my bait about one to three feet off the bottom. In river environments, look for channels in eddy pools and slack current areas just outside the main flow."



Photo by John N. Felsher

Sharon Jeffreys displays a channel catfish she caught. Channel cats like all kinds of bait.

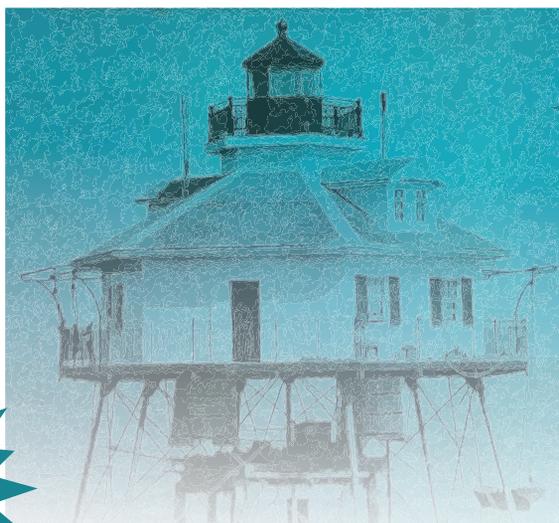
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