

### ○ American Eel

Some people think an eel looks like a snake, but if you look closely you will see that it has fins. Adults are usually white or light-colored below and yellow to olive green above, but coloration is variable. If you have ever caught an eel on your fishing line, you know that it feels slimy. This slime coat protects the eel from disease. When an eel is caught on a fishing line, the stress felt by the eel results in an increase of this slime coat. Eels are commonly used as bait for crab traps, but sometimes are smoked and eaten. **Anglers are allowed to keep up to 25 eels per day, but none can be less than 9 inches long; eels can only be harvested between January 1 and August 31, unless fishing with a spear, trap or pot with which fishing is year-round.**



### ○ Channel Catfish

Channel catfish are members of the bullhead catfish family, Ictaluridae, and are a freshwater species that are commonly found in estuarine waters. Channel catfish are long slender fish with barbels on the chin that look like long black whiskers. There are four pairs of barbels around the mouth, two on the chin, one at the angle of the mouth, and one behind the nostril. Fresh baits such as peeler or soft crab, shrimp, squid, chicken liver, processed catfish bait, hot dogs and cut fish are good baits for catching channel catfish. **Channel catfish can be harvested at any size and any time of year.**



### ○ Brown Bullhead

Brown bullhead have gray, brown or black sides, sometimes with green or olive-gold. The belly is usually white or yellow and the fins, dark and sometimes black. The fish may be mottled or not. The most distinguishing feature of this fish is the barbels that surround the mouth. The barbels are long and brown or black, and are used like tongues to taste the environment around them. Like sunfishes and bass, brown bullhead build nests during spring with one or both parents performing egg-maintenance. Anglers catch them with a variety of tackle though they are not as commonly harvested as channel catfish. **Bullheads can be harvested at any size and any time of year.**



## MATTAWOMAN CREEK'S LIFE LIST CHALLENGE

### ○ Largemouth Bass

Largemouth bass can be recognized by the lower jaw which extends past the back edge of the eye. It is dark green above with silvery sides and belly. A dark stripe runs across its body. This species is considered the most popular sport fish in the United States. Good baits for catching largemouth bass include live minnows, night crawlers, and a variety of artificial lures. While most anglers targeting largemouth bass practice catch-and-release, it remains a prized food fish for some. **Only five bass per day can be harvested per day, with none being under 12-inches throughout the year and none less than 15-inches between March 1 and June 15.**



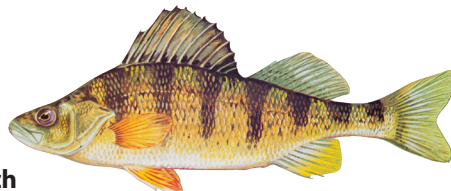
### ○ White Perch

These fish are silvery and frequently have irregular dusky longitudinal lines along its body. They have a slightly projecting lower jaw and small teeth. Their dorsal fins are separate and their anal fin possesses three strong spines. They are one of the most abundant fish in Chesapeake Bay and will spend their entire lives here. White perch is a very popular food fish. **Anglers can harvest as many as they want, year-round and at any size with a hook and line.**



### ○ Yellow Perch

The general coloring of yellow perch tends to be brassy green to golden yellow on their sides and white to yellow on their belly. Their most distinguishing feature is 6-8 dark vertical bands found across their back and sides. Recreational fishing for yellow perch is a very significant fishery in Maryland and has become a tradition for many anglers as the first fish to "arrive" in the rivers after the first of the year. During early spring, female yellow perch lay their eggs in long gelatinous strands, usually floating or hanging from vegetation or some other structure. **An angler can harvest up to ten per day, year-round, but none can be under 9 inches long.**



### ○ Bluegill

Bluegills have small mouths, an oval shaped body, often with a dark spot on their soft back fin. The fish is olive green on the upper body and light yellow on its belly. Young fish have lateral bars along the side of their body. The male picks a good spot and makes a nest. After the female lays her eggs, the male guards the eggs and newly hatched young. Bluegill is commonly the first fish caught by many new anglers because it is such a common species in freshwater and brackish waters. Anglers can catch bluegill using worms and light artificial tackle. **Bluegill can be harvested at any size and any time of year.**



### ○ Pumpkinseed

A common and beautiful species of sunfish, pumpkinseed has an olive colored black with blue lines and dark scales. Many scales are often colored bright orange or yellow. The breast and belly can be yellow, gold, or brassy orange. The "earflap" or flat extension of the operculum bone, is a noticeable feature of the species. It is mostly black but at its most terminal margin, a sliver of pale to bright orange distinguishes it. Anglers catch Pumpkinseed in sluggish waters, ponds, pools and backwaters of creeks or streams. The species can be caught in submerged grasses, wood or other forms of cover, from fresh or brackish water, and is one of the most widespread species of sunfish in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. **Pumpkinseed can be harvested at any size and any time of year.**



### ○ Black Crappie

Flecked with black and silver along its broad body, the black crappie is often caught by anglers in weedy, vegetated swamps, backwaters and ponds. They use fallen trees and stumps for protection and hunting grounds. Anglers catch them using light tackle, flies, and worms. Often considered a sweet meat by anglers, **black crappie can be harvested at any size and any time of year.**



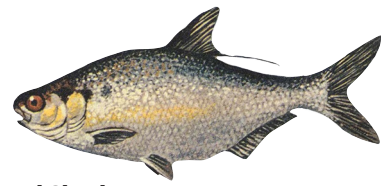
### ○ Longnose Gar

Longnose gar is a native and unique fish in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. It has a long, round bar with tough, thick scales. It has a long beak-like mouth with several, small pointed teeth. People can find them grouped during spring in shallow water coves, where the fish reproduces. Anglers target longnose gar using hook-and-line and bow-and-arrow. When using a hook-and-line, anglers have used dough balls, frayed cord, and shiny artificial tackle. To cook gar, some people have fried "gar balls" with the clumps of meat. Native Americans used the skin's thick protection as shield covers. **An angler can harvest as many longnose gar as they want, year-round and at any size.**



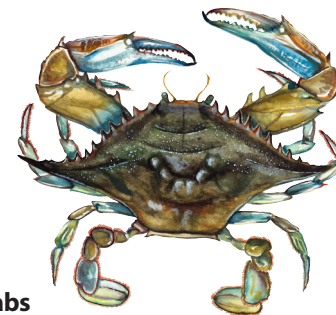
### ○ Gizzard Shad

Gizzard shad is characterized by their inferior, sub-terminal, toothless mouth and thick-walled, gizzard-like stomach. The last dorsal ray is formed into a long filament. As with other species of the genus *Dorosoma*, such as threadfin shad, the filament length varies greatly with age. Gizzard shad is an extremely important part of the ecosystem and is rarely eaten by humans. Young gizzard shad are good forage for predators. **Gizzard shad are used as bait and can be harvested in any number, any size at any time of the year.**



### Other Species

Mattawoman Creek is home to many species of fish. Many of those are rarely seen by anglers. Juvenile river herring, hogchoker, Atlantic silverside, and goldfish are all examples of fishes that you might find in the creek. Have you seen a species that you don't know? Send digital photos and descriptions to [fishingreports.dnr@maryland.gov](mailto:fishingreports.dnr@maryland.gov).



### ○ Blue Crabs

Maryland is famously home to striped bass, oysters and blue crabs. Of these, blue crabs get big and fat in Mattawoman Creek and Potomac River. Not only important in the ecosystem, blue crab importantly takes center stage on the dinner table for many Marylanders. When not eaten steamed, the flavorful meat has been used to create crab cakes, dips, and stews. A Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Sport Fishing License is NOT required when fishing for blue crabs. Sometimes, however, a recreational crabbing license may be needed. **People who use handlines and dipnets, or those fishing from a boat with a crabbing boat decal, do not need a crabbing license. People who use other types of gear may be required to buy a crabbing license. People can harvest up to 24 male hard crabs and up to 12 soft crabs or male peeler crabs without a license.**





**On the Lookout**  
**Northern snakehead** (*Channa argus*) was first reported in Maryland in 2002 and from the Potomac River in 2004. Since then, the species has become abundant in Potomac River and Mattawoman Creek. The species is native to Asia. It can reach over 33 inches in length and tolerate a wide range of temperatures (32 – 85°F). This fish prefers stagnant shallow ponds, swamps, or slow moving streams and rivers with mud substrate and aquatic vegetation. Female snakeheads average about 40,000 eggs but can release up to 100,000 eggs and may spawn multiple times per year. Newly hatched larvae are protected by both parents until they reach the juvenile stage. Sexual maturity can be reached in two years when the total body length is about 12 inches.



**Blue catfish** (*Ictalurus furcatus*) was introduced to Virginia waters, where it spread into Maryland’s portion of Chesapeake Bay watershed. The species natively lives in the Mississippi River, Missouri River, and Ohio River basins. The species is encountered in freshwater and brackish water and lives in major river channels and backwaters of large rivers, like Mattawoman Creek. Blue catfish can now be found in deep channels of several major rivers of Chesapeake Bay, including ones with silted bottoms. During winter, individuals retreat to deeper water and during spring, move into sloughs and backwaters.

**Environmental Concern:** Blue catfish and northern snakehead have been described as voracious predators of fishes and crustaceans, like crabs and crawfish. Because of their feeding style, they could outcompete popular sport fish or depress populations of prey species. Biologists are also concerned that they could spread parasites and diseases that could harm native species.

**What is being done:** Both species are widespread in tidal waters of Chesapeake Bay. Agencies continue to conduct research to assess impacts of these species in the ecosystem. Learning about the biology and behavior of the species will help biologists determine more efficient methods of removal and control.

**Fishing:** Anglers catch catfish by sinking worms and stinky baits around docks and deeper water, and also along riprap or bulkheads. Catfish have spines so be careful when handling the fish and dehooking. Northern snakeheads are caught using a lot of the same methods anglers use to catch largemouth bass. These include casting artificial baits, like worms and creature baits, also spinners, around submerged or emergent vegetation. Archers have also had success by targeting fish using bow and arrow.

**Regulations**  
Blue catfish and northern snakehead can be harvested at any size using legal methods, during any season and in any number desired. A fishing license is required to fish for these species.

**Important Information**

To report a catch of an invasive species, please call: **877-620-8367** or **410-260-8300**

To report on illegal activity, please call: **443-433-4112**

To report an emergency or a dead marine mammal or sea turtle, please call the Natural Resources Police 24 hr. hotline: **800-628-9944**

To report an emergency on a boat use: **VHF-CH-16**

To report a fish kill, please call the Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Safety and Environmental 24 hr. hotline: **877-224-7229**

For any current fish consumption advisory, please call: **410-537-3906** or visit: **[mde.state.md.us/programs/Marylander/fishandshellfish/Pages/fishconsumptionadvisory.aspx](https://mde.state.md.us/programs/Marylander/fishandshellfish/Pages/fishconsumptionadvisory.aspx)**

For a full list of regulations, please refer to the **Maryland Guide to Fishing and Crabbing** or go to: **[eregulations.com/maryland/fishing/](https://eregulations.com/maryland/fishing/)**

Maryland Department of Natural Resources  
Fishing and Boating Services  
Tawes State Office Building, 580 Taylor Avenue, B-2  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
410-260-8300 | 800-688-3467

Freshwater Program - Southern Region  
Regional Manager: Mary Groves 301-888-2423

**[dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries](https://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries)**

04/2020 DNR 17-121018-110



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# POCKET GUIDE TO FISHING MATTAWOMAN CREEK



**You Have Arrived**  
Mattawoman Creek offers a diverse environment that provides homes to many species of fishes, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates. This creek offers one of the nation’s most famous fisheries for largemouth bass. It is also home to popular game fish and two well-known invasive fishes, northern snakehead and blue catfish. This is your guide to discover that biodiversity.

**Ways to Discover Fish Diversity**  
Discover the biodiversity of the world’s most species-rich vertebrate, fishes.

<b>Hook-and-Line</b>	Shoreline, bridge - popular spots
<b>Cast Net</b>	Practice your technique but remember the diameter of the net can’t be more than 20 feet.
<b>Fyke Net</b>	Fyke nets are often used by watermen to help bring perch and catfish to a fish market or grocery store near you
<b>Bow-and-Arrow</b>	Can only be used for a few fishes, like carp or northern snakehead. Just be sure to get permission of everyone within 100 yards of you.
<b>Jugs</b>	Use for catfish but can only be used July 1 - February 28. Use up to ten with two hooks per line, and one line per jug.

**A License to Discovery**  
To fish the Mattawoman Creek, you will need a **Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Sport Fishing License**, unless you:  
1) possess a valid commercial fishing license;  
2) are fishing from a licensed charter boat or commercial fishing pier;  
3) are fishing from a boat with a boat decal; or  
4) fishing from your personal, private property. Money from fishing license sales support work to protect and to promote the Bay’s fishing resources, now and for generations to come.

Residents - \$15/yr  
Non-Residents - \$22.50/yr  
*Allows access to all tidal waters. Funding from license sales directly help to protect the Chesapeake Bay.*

**Add-Ons**  
Northern Snakehead Commercial Fishing License - \$15  
*(Allows commercial harvest of northern snakeheads with bowfishing gear or hook and line from tidal waters. Unless the harvester also holds a Seafood Dealer License, snakeheads harvested under this license must be sold to a licensed dealer)*  
Invasive Catfish Finfish Trotline - \$15  
Unlimited Finfish Harvester License - (cost varies)  
Seafood Dealer License - \$50