

GEORGIA AQUARIUM ANIMAL FACT SHEET

Smallmouth Buffalo

Ictiobus bubalus

Range/Habitat

- The smallmouth buffalo is a North American fresh water fish of the sucker family that is found in the Lake Michigan drainage, as well as the Mississippi River basin from Pennsylvania and Michigan to Montana and south to the Gulf of Mexico.
- It inhabits pools, backwaters and main channels of small to large rivers in most of its range. It also is found primarily in large rivers and warm lakes of the plains states.
- This species requires fairly clean and deep water and its population has declined due to pollution and siltation.
- It prefers deeper waters than does the largemouth buffalo and is more likely to be found over fine substrates.

Physical Characteristics

- The back and sides of the smallmouth buffalo are light brown or otherwise dark with a coppery or greenish tint. Its underside is pale yellow to white.
- This species is second in size among suckers to the bigmouth buffalo.
- It can be distinguished from the bigmouth buffalo by its small, downward-oriented mouth. In comparison, the mouth of the bigmouth buffalo is forward-facing and larger. Also, the smallmouth buffalo's back is more elevated, or humped, than that of the bigmouth buffalo.
- The maximum length is listed as 29.5 inches (75 cm). While the maximum weight has been reported to be between 30 and 40 lbs. (14 –18 kg).

Diet/Feeding

- This species feeds on invertebrates, insects, shellfish, algae, and other vegetation, by grinding the food with the bony plates in its throat.

Conservation Status

- The smallmouth buffalo is not on the IUCN Red List

Additional Information

- The smallmouth buffalo, like the bigmouth buffalo, is of economic importance, contributing significantly to the commercial harvest of fish in the central states.
- Females lay 18,000 to 500,000 eggs per year.
- Its life span is between 15 and 20 years.
- Other names given to this fish are “razor back buffalo”, “thicklipped buffalo”, and “roachback”.
- The smallmouth buffalo is often confused with the black buffalo.

Sources

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fish/infish/species/sucker/sbf.phtml>

www.fishbase.org

McClane's Field Guide to Freshwater Fishes of North America. McClane, A.J., pg. 98
The Fishes of Tennessee. Etnier, D.A. and Starnes, W.C., pg. 277