

**VIMS Juvenile Fish Survey
Net Notes
March 2007**

In March, a large blue catfish (39 in. fork length, 52 lb.) was captured by the VIMS Juvenile Fish Survey in the Pamunkey River near Eltham Marsh. This species inhabits some brackish waters, but is most commonly found in the main channels of large rivers. The survey now regularly catches blue catfish in the York River upriver of its Poropotank tributary, at salinities of less than 11 parts per thousand.

Blue catfish are not native to Virginia. Blue catfish were first stocked in the James and Rappahannock Rivers in the 1970s and 1980s by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. They were first introduced to the York River system in 1985, when they were stocked in the Mattaponi River. It wasn't until 1994 that they were first captured in the Pamunkey River by the VIMS Juvenile Fish Survey.

Blue catfish are scavenging carnivores consuming clams, insect larvae, crabs and other invertebrates, as well as fishes such as bay anchovy, gizzard shad and white perch. During the late spring, males construct a nest where they guard the eggs and newly hatched young until they leave the nest. Blue catfish can be distinguished from channel catfish by the angular shape (not rounded) of their anal fin. The state trophy record for blue catfish is 95 lb. 11 oz. (James River, 2006).

Average Condition of Bottom Waters During March (Note: Bay not sampled during March)						
Region	Temperature (°F)		Salinity (parts per thousand)		Dissolved Oxygen (mg/L)	
	2007	2006	2007	2006	2007	2006
Lower James River	44.5	47.9	20.2	22.8	11.5	10.2
Lower York River	43.0	43.3	19.1	16.9	11.0	11.0
Lower Rappahannock River	41.2	41.7	12.6	12.9	12.1	10.4