

Invasive Species Alert

Northern Snakehead

(*Channa argus*)

Not detected in Michigan

Identification:

- Body length can reach up to 33 inches
- Color is generally tan with dark brown mottling
- Sharp teeth like a pike or pickerel
- Extended anal fin
- Pelvic fin is up near the gills and pectoral fins



Photo: U.S. Geological Survey Archive, U.S. Geological Survey, Bugwood.org

Habitat: Snakehead fish live in a wide variety of habitats. This fish species has the ability to breathe out of water anywhere from 3 to 7 days. This allows for the potential ability to move from one body of water to another using its pectoral fins, but the process is slow and usually unsuccessful.



Photo: U.S. Geological Survey Archive, USGS

Diet: These fish are voracious carnivores.

Native Range: Eastern Asia

U.S. Distribution: Northern snakehead fish have been reported in a handful of states on the east coast and in California. The only established population appears to be in Arkansas.

Local Concern: As with many non-native and invasive species, snakehead fish have no natural predators in the United States. This allows for competition and consumption of native fish species. Additionally, Northern snakehead fish can survive in waters with low oxygen levels, giving them a competitive advantage over native species.

Means of Introduction: Release from fish markets

Native look-alikes and how you can tell them apart from a Northern snakehead:

- ✓ **Burbot:** A split dorsal fin and barbels on the lower jaw are features that separate this species from snakehead
- ✓ **Bowfin:** Much shorter anal fin than snakehead fish, males and juveniles will have a characteristic black spot at the base of the tail
- ✓ **Mudpuppy:** Aquatic salamander with 4 legs, a flattened tail, and reddish gills behind the head

Report this species to Lucas Nathan, MDNR, at nathanl@michigan.gov or 517-284-6235 or at misin.msu.edu or download the MISIN app to your smartphone