

Stop

The Invasion



Photograph courtesy of the U.S. Geological Survey

Northern Snakehead

Chana argus

Report Sightings
@

invasivespecies.wa.gov

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Photograph courtesy of Phil Westra, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org

What is it?

The northern snakehead is an aggressive freshwater fish that can grow to be about 4 feet long. It has been found in a variety of freshwater lakes, swamps, ponds, and streams of various temperatures, but cannot tolerate saltwater. The northern snakehead fish is native to parts of Asia and Africa.

Is it here yet?

No, although the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife recently confiscated a northern snakehead at the Canadian border. It has been seen in the wild in several locations on the East Coast.

Why should I care?

Northern snakehead fish are voracious eaters that prey on fish, crustaceans, frogs, insects, small reptiles, birds, and mammals, with significant impacts to food chains and ecosystems. Adults may attack humans who approach young. These fish also can introduce diseases and parasites.

What should I do if I find one?

Report online at www.invasivespecies.wa.gov/report.shtml.

How can we stop it?

Do not purchase, sell, or trade this species, and do not release aquarium fish into the wild. Northern snakehead fish is classified as a Prohibited Aquatic Animal Species in Washington, meaning it may not be possessed, purchased, sold, propagated, transported, or released into state waters (Revised Code of Washington 77.12.020, Washington Administrative Code 220-12-090). The importation of northern snakehead fish is regulated further by the federal Lacey Act, under which it is listed as an Injurious Wildlife Species.



Photograph courtesy of Howard F. Schwartz, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org

What are its characteristics?

- The northern snakehead fish has a large mouth with a strong jaw and sharp, canine-like teeth.
- Its head resembles that of a snake; it has an elongated cylindrical shape with enlarged scales and eyes on each side near the top front of the head.
- The fish has elongated dorsal and anal fins, with pelvic fins close to its pectoral fins and gills.
- It is generally tan with dark brown mottling.

How do I distinguish it from native species?

The northern snakehead is relatively easy to identify by a few distinguishing characteristics. To distinguish snakehead fish from native burbot (*Lota Lota*) and native bowfin (*Amia calva*) visit:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: <http://fws.gov/midwest/fisheries/library/fact-snakehead.pdf>

Where do I get more information?

- National Invasive Species Information Center: <http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/aquatics/snakehead.shtml>
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/snakeheadfactsheetedited.pdf
- Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife: http://wdfw.wa.gov/ais/species.php?Name=channa_argus

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