


CAT FISH

 MEERVAL

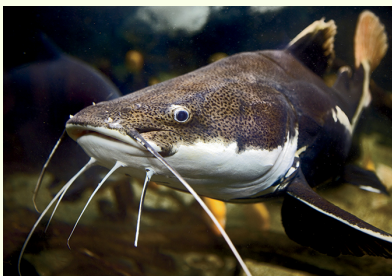
 PEIXE-GATO

 PESCE-GATTO

 SILURIDÉS

Geographical Distribution

Catfish species live inland or in coastal waters of every continent except Antarctica. Representatives of the genus *Ictalurus* have been introduced into European waters in the hope of obtaining a sporting and food resource. However, the European stock of American catfishes has not achieved the dimensions of these fish in their native waters, and have only increased the ecological pressure on native European fauna.



Habitat

They are found in freshwater environments, though most inhabit shallow, running water. Representatives of at least eight families are hypogean (live underground) with three families that are also troglobitic (inhabiting caves).

Description

Catfish are named for its prominent barbels which resemble a cat's whiskers. Catfish have a variety of body shapes, though most have a cylindrical body with a flattened ventrum to allow for bottom feeding. Catfish have no scales, they have slimy, mucus-covered body. . They have one of the greatest ranges in size: they can be as large as 200 kg (Mekong giant catfish) or as small as a parasite (candiru).

Feeding behavior

Most catfish are bottom feeders. They generally feed through suction or gulping rather than biting and cutting prey.

Fishing

Closed season: none

Catfish have widely been caught and farmed for food for hundreds of years in Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. Judgments as to the quality and flavor vary, with some food critics considering catfish as being excellent food, while others dismiss them as watery and lacking in flavor. Catfish is high in Vitamin D.