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It's National Catfish Day!

Let's Celebrate this Remarkable Fish!

Introduction to National Catfish Day

National Catfish Day is celebrated every year on June 25th in the United States. It was first proclaimed by President Ronald Reagan in 1987 to honor the catfish industry and its contribution to American cuisine and economy. Catfish are not only an important food source but also fascinating creatures with unique biological traits. Let's dive into the world of catfish and learn more about them!

Biology of Catfish

Catfish are freshwater fish belonging to the Animal Kingdom's class **Actinopterygii**, the order **Siluriformes**, and the family **Ictaluridae**. They are known for their distinctive whisker-like barbels, which resemble a cat's whiskers, giving them their common name.

Habitat

Catfish are versatile and can be found in a variety of habitats, including rivers, lakes, ponds, and even in some coastal marine environments. They prefer slow-moving or still waters with soft, muddy bottoms where they can easily hunt for food.

Reproduction and Care for Young

Catfish have a unique way of taking care of their young. After the female catfish lays her eggs, the male catfish guards them diligently. He will fan the eggs with his fins to keep them oxygenated and protect them from predators until they hatch. This parental care increases the survival rate of the young catfish.

Size and Weight

Catfish can vary significantly in size depending on the species. The smallest catfish, such as the banjo catfish, can be as small as a few inches long. In contrast, the largest catfish, like the Mekong giant catfish, can weigh over 600 pounds and grow up to 10 feet long!

10 Fun Facts about Catfish

1. Catfish have over 3,000 species, making them one of the most diverse groups of fish.
2. They can live in a variety of water conditions, from freshwater to brackish water.
3. Some catfish species can breathe through their skin when out of water.
4. Catfish have taste buds all over their bodies, which helps them detect food in muddy waters.
5. They use their barbels to sense their environment and find food.
6. The channel catfish is the most popular species for aquaculture in the United States.
7. Catfish can produce sounds by rubbing their fins together or vibrating their swim bladder.
8. The electric catfish from Africa can produce an electric shock to stun prey or defend against predators.
9. Some catfish species, like the walking catfish, can move short distances on land to find new water sources.
10. Catfish have a varied diet that includes insects, smaller fish, plants, and detritus.

By celebrating National Catfish Day, we appreciate these incredible creatures and their role in our ecosystem and culture. Whether you're fishing, enjoying a catfish meal, or just learning about their unique biology, take a moment to think about the fascinating world of catfish!

Extra Learning Resources

Electric Catfish

https://whozoo.org/Intro2001/heathami/HAH_MalapterurusElectricus.htm

Mekong Giant Catfish

<https://www.mandai.com/en/river-wonders/animals-and-zones/mekong-giant-catfish.html>

Vocabulary Words

Actinopterygii: The class of ray-finned fishes, which includes catfish and many other species.

Siluriformes: The order to which catfish belong, characterized by their barbels and lack of scales.

Ictaluridae: The family of North American freshwater catfish.

Detritus: Organic matter produced by the decomposition of organisms, part of the diet for some catfish.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What unique feature do catfish have that gives them their name?
 - A) Fins
 - B) Scales
 - C) Barbels
 - D) Teeth
2. In what type of habitat are catfish most commonly found?
 - A) Ocean
 - B) Fast-moving rivers
 - C) Still or slow-moving waters
 - D) Mountains
3. How do male catfish help in the reproduction process?
 - A) They lay the eggs
 - B) They guard and oxygenate the eggs
 - C) They eat the eggs
 - D) They leave the eggs unattended
4. Which of the following statements is true about catfish?
 - A) All catfish live in the ocean
 - B) Catfish do not have taste buds
 - C) Catfish use their barbels to sense their environment
 - D) Catfish cannot breathe out of water
5. What is the largest known species of catfish?
 - A) Channel catfish
 - B) Mekong giant catfish
 - C) Banjo catfish
 - D) Electric catfish

Answers:

1. C) Barbels
2. C) Still or slow-moving waters
3. B) They guard and oxygenate the eggs
4. C) Catfish use their barbels to sense their environment
5. B) Mekong giant catfish