



Ameiurus melas; Italy; ~150 mm SL.

Family Ictaluridae

North American catfishes

Ictaluridae are endemic to North and Central America, with a southern distribution reaching Guatemala. The family includes approximately 50 species in seven genera, three of which (*Satan*, *Trogloglanis*, *Prietella*) are eyeless inhabitants of subterranean waters in Texas and Mexico. *Ameiurus* was introduced to Germany as early as 1885, and at least four species of Ictaluridae have become established in Europe (*Ameiurus melas*, *A. nebulosus*, *Ictalurus furcatus*, and *I. punctatus*). *Ictalurus punctatus* has become established in Cyprus. As these species and additional ones are widely available in the aquaculture and aquarium trade, their introduction is expected to occur in other regions of West

Asia in the future. **Further reading.** Taylor 1969 (systematics); Lundberg 1982, 1992 (phylogeny); Stoeckel & Burr 1999 (reproduction); Hardman & Page 2003 (phylogeny); Nelson et al. 2016 (diversity).

Ictalurus punctatus

Common name. Channel catfish.

Diagnosis. Distinguished from other West Asian catfishes by: ● caudal deeply forked / ○ adipose present / ○ juveniles and small adults usually with dark-grey or black spots. Size up to 1000 mm SL, usually <570 mm SL.

Distribution. Cyprus. Native to North America, Hudson Bay, Great Lakes-St. Lawrence and Mississippi drainages, and rivers in between. Widespread in other parts of North America. Introduced to Europe for aquaculture. Self-sustaining populations recorded in lower Ebro (Spain), Oglio and Pavia provinces (northern Italy), Arno and Tiber



Ictalurus punctatus; Arno drainage, Italy; 300 mm SL.

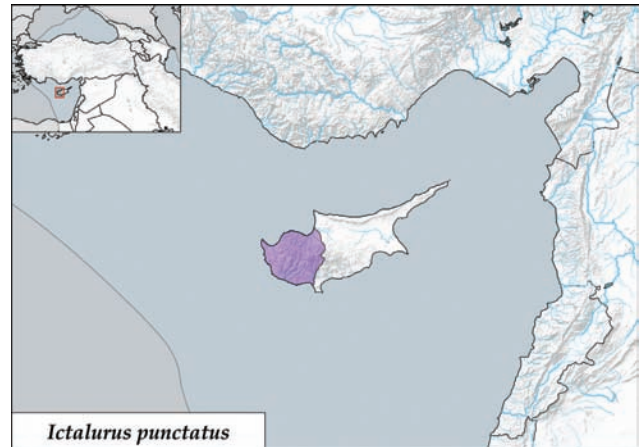
(central Italy), lower Kuban and Don drainages (Russia). May also occur in other areas.

Habitat. Warm lowland rivers and large streams, ponds, lakes, and reservoirs. Usually associated with low-flow riverine habitats. Also found in upper estuarine habitats with salinities up to 15 ‰.

Biology. Lives up to 24 years. First spawns at 4–6 years of age. Spawning begins in May at about 20–30°C. Nests are built in sheltered areas by males only or by both sexes. Males take care of eggs and guard nest. Females spawn only once a year. Eggs hatch in 5–10 days. Omnivorous, feeding on algae, plant material, invertebrates, and fish. Usually nocturnal.

Conservation status. Non-native; introduced for recreational fisheries.

Further reading. Scott & Crossman 1974 (biology); Jenkins & Burkhead 1993 (biology); Zogaris et al. 2012 (Cyprus).



Several Ariid catfishes occur in the Persian Gulf and might be caught in brackish waters. They are superficially a bit similar to *Ictalurus* but their identification remains challenging. This individual caught in Iran might be *Plicofollis dussumieri*.