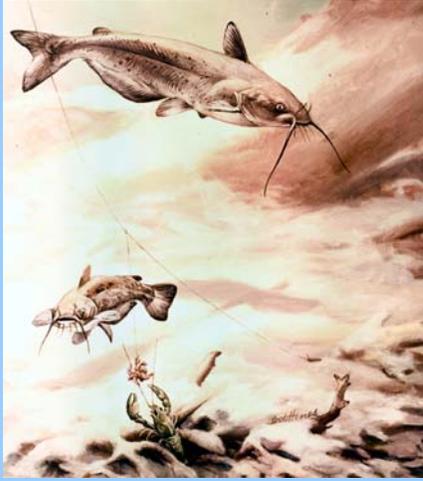


CHANNEL CATFISH

(Ictalurus punctatus)

**Oneida Lake Status:
Common**



Chanel catfish in American artwork



Angling for channel catfish reaps big rewards:



Line drawing showing channel catfish details

- One of the largest Oneida Lake sport fish
- Excellent sense of taste and smell
- Major aquaculture industry in the U.S.

Channel catfish grow to be much larger than their cousins the bullheads, and may be as long as 35 inches and weigh as much as 17 pounds in Oneida Lake. Channel catfish are a bluish silver color, and are easily recognized by the presence of 4 pairs of whiskers (barbels) around the mouth. Channel catfish can be identified by their large size and deeply forked tail (see line drawing below).

Channel catfish live in large lakes and rivers, and unlike bullheads, they prefer clear water habitats. In Oneida Lake, they are located in areas with gravel or rock bottoms, and can survive in low oxygen conditions. Channel catfish have an



Channel catfish are easily identified by the presence of 4 pairs of barbels.

excellent sense of taste and smell, and have taste buds distributed over the entire surface of their body. Because of their size, channel catfish diets consist of more live fish than bullhead diets do. In Oneida Lake, the channel catfish typically eat small fish, crayfish, and assorted invertebrates.

The channel catfish is the largest catfish in New York State, and is a formidable sport fish. Its unique ability to quickly turn food into flesh has made it a major aquaculture industry, though mainly in the southern United States. While this catfish has good fighting qualities and is great to eat, few Oneida Lake anglers seek it out. If hooked in Oneida Lake, you can certainly expect a great story and a great meal.

Prepared by:

Alexander Sonneborn
Cornell Biological Field Station

January 2007