

FRONT

Northern Snakehead WATCH

Photos courtesy of Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Northern Snakehead (*Channa argus*)

Northern Snakehead
(Close-up of head)

The Northern Snakehead can be confused with the native North American Bowfin

North American Bowfin (*Amia calva*)

Photos courtesy of Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Northern Snakehead WATCH

BACK

Northern Snakehead

The **Northern snakehead** (*Channa argus*) is native to China, Russia, and Korea. It has been introduced to the United States through fish markets and the aquarium trade. The first discovery of northern snakeheads in Pennsylvania was in 2004 in FDR Park in Philadelphia.

These fish compete with native species for food and habitat. Juveniles feed on zooplankton, insect larvae, small crustaceans, and baby fish. Predatory adults feed mostly on other fishes, but they also eat crustaceans, frogs, small reptile, small birds, and mammals. The snakehead can breathe surface air which allows it to tolerate low oxygen conditions and slither through marsh areas from one water body to another.

How to Identify Northern Snakehead

The northern snakehead can grow up to 47 inches and 15 pounds. As they mature, the fish change color. Younger fish may be gold-tinted brown to pale gray in color, while older fish are generally dark brown with large black blotches.

Sometimes the Northern snakehead is confused with the **North American bowfin** (*Amia calva*). See photos for differences. Juvenile and male bowfin have an eyespot on the tail (females lack this spot); northern snakeheads never have an eyespot.

What Should I Do If I Catch One?

- If you think you have caught a snakehead, DO NOT put it back in the water. Please note the exact location where you found it and kill it humanely. Notify the **Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (610-847-2442)** or **Pennsylvania Sea Grant (215-806-0894)**.
- *It is against the law in Pennsylvania to possess, release, or transport live snakehead species.*

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