

Brown bullhead catfish

Ameiurus nebulosus

Introduced

Undesirable

Photo: Waikato Regional Council

Brown bullhead catfish were introduced in 1877 from the United States for unknown reasons. They lay approximately 6000 golden eggs (c. 3mm) which are guarded by both parents, mostly the male. Typically Waikato catfish live for an average of three years, reach lengths of 270mm and weigh approximately 0.3kg. In the 2011/2012 survey of the Waikato we encountered sixty-three catfish ranging from 25mm to 290mm. In the 2014/15 survey we found thirty-two catfish ranging from 24 mm to 269 mm. In the 2016/17 survey two individuals were found that were 96 mm and 108 mm. The 2017/18 survey found eight catfish ranging from 29 mm to 84 mm. Their greatest impact in the Waikato River appears to be competition for benthic (river-bed) food and, with high numbers, degradation of water quality due to feeding habits (re-suspending sediment).



Note: Measuring board is 300mm long.