

Dwarf Snakehead

Snakehead fishes, also known as Channidae, are a family of freshwater fish found in Africa and Asia, including India. They are known for their distinctive elongated body shape and sharp-toothed mouth, resembling that of a snake, which gives them their common name. Snakehead fishes are apex predators and can grow up to 1.5 meters in length and weigh up to 20 kg. They are valued as food fish and are considered a delicacy in some parts of Asia, including India. The most commonly found species in India is the Giant Snakehead, scientifically known as *Channa marulius*, which is a popular game fish and is prized for its hard-fighting nature. The Snakehead fish is also a popular aquarium fish due to its unique appearance and aggressive behavior. However, some species of Snakehead fish have been introduced outside their natural range and have become invasive, causing ecological and economic damage. Therefore, it is essential to monitor their distribution and prevent the spread of invasive species to protect the native ecosystems.

The Dwarf Snakehead Fish, scientifically known as *Channa gachua*, is a freshwater fish species found in South and Southeast Asia, including India. As its name suggests, it is a small-sized fish that usually grows up to 25 cm in length. The Dwarf Snakehead Fish has a distinctive coloration with a mottled brown or greenish-brown body and a sharp-toothed mouth. It is a predatory fish that feeds on a variety of aquatic animals, including fish, crustaceans, and insects. The Dwarf Snakehead Fish is popular among aquarium enthusiasts due to its small size, hardy nature, and unique appearance. In the wild, the fish is an important component of the aquatic food chain and is preyed upon by larger fish and other aquatic predators.

Serial No.	Characteristics	Description
1	Common name	Dwarf Snakehead
2	Scientific name	Channa gachua
3	Colour	Brownish-black with yellowish underbelly
4	Average length in m	Can grow up to 0.35 meters in length
5	Average weight in kgs	Can weigh up to 1 kilogram
6	Found in river systems of	Found in freshwater rivers, streams, and ponds in South and Southeast Asia, including the Ganges-Brahmaputra and Mekong river basins
7	Habitat	Prefers shallow, slow-moving and standing waters with muddy or sandy substrates, and vegetation cover
8	Any special characteristics	Has a cylindrical body with a flattened head, and a large mouth with sharp teeth. Can breathe air through its gills and the lining of its mouth, allowing it to survive in oxygen-depleted waters. Exhibits parental care by guarding its eggs and young.

Features

Channa gachua, commonly known as the dwarf snakehead or frogmouth snakehead, is a species of freshwater fish native to Southeast Asia, including Bangladesh, India, and Thailand.

Channa gachua is a small-sized fish and typically reaches a maximum length of around 15-20 cm (6-8 inches). The weight of this fish can vary depending on age, gender, and environmental factors. Generally, the weight of adult Channa gachua is around 50-70 grams. The color of Channa gachua can vary depending on the habitat and breeding conditions. Typically, the body color ranges from light brown to dark brown, with a white or cream underbelly. The fins are generally reddish-brown to dark brown.

Channa gachua has a long and cylindrical body with a broad and flattened head. It has a pair of large and sharp teeth in the upper jaw and a single row of smaller teeth in the lower jaw. The dorsal fin is positioned towards the back of the body, and the tail fin is fan-shaped.

It is a relatively slow swimmer and prefers to hide among vegetation and other obstacles. However, it can quickly move to catch prey or escape from predators. Channa gachua is a carnivorous fish and feeds on a variety of small aquatic animals, including fish, crustaceans, and insects.

Habitat

In terms of habitat, Channa gachua is typically found in slow-moving streams, swamps, and ponds with a lot of vegetation cover. It prefers shallow water with a muddy or sandy substrate and a temperature range of 22-28°C. This species is often found in areas with dense vegetation such as submerged plants, floating plants, and overhanging trees or branches. These habitats shelter them and hiding places, which they need to avoid predators and ambush their prey.

Channa gachua can adapt to a variety of environments, including ponds, streams, lakes, and even small canals. It is a hardy species that can tolerate changes in water quality and can survive in water with low oxygen levels.

In the aquarium trade, *Channa gachua* is a popular species that is kept in home aquariums, but it requires specific environmental conditions and diet to thrive. When kept in a home aquarium, it is important to replicate the natural habitat of this species by providing plenty of hiding places and vegetation cover.

River System

In India, *Channa gachua* is found in the Ganges-Brahmaputra river basin, which is one of the largest river systems in the world. It is also found in the Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna, and Cauvery river systems, among others. In Bangladesh, it is found in the Brahmaputra-Jamuna river system, which is the largest river system in the country, as well as in smaller rivers and ponds across the country.

Threatened Status

Channa gachua is not currently considered a threatened species. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has assessed this species as being of “Least Concern” in terms of its conservation status.

Although there is no significant threat to the overall population of *Channa gachua*, localized populations may be affected by habitat destruction, water pollution, and overfishing. In some areas, this species is also collected for the aquarium trade, which can impact wild populations if done unsustainably. However, there are currently no major threats to the species as a whole, and it is considered a widespread species in many regions.