

Giant 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.

Channa Marulius, commonly known as Giant Snakehead, is a freshwater fish species found in South and Southeast Asia, including India. It is the largest species of Snakehead fish and can grow up to 1.5 meters in length and weigh up to 20 kg. The Giant Snakehead has a unique appearance with a greenish-brown coloration and a sharp-toothed mouth. It is a predatory fish that feeds on a variety of aquatic animals, including fish, crustaceans, and insects. The Giant Snakehead is prized as a game fish due to its hard-fighting nature and is popular among anglers in some regions. However, it is also considered a potential pest due to its invasive behavior, and therefore, its movement and distribution are monitored to prevent it from causing ecological and economic damage. The Giant Snakehead is also an important food fish in some parts of Asia, including India, and is farmed commercially.

Serial No.	Characteristics	Description
1	Common name	Great Snakehead or Bullseye Snakehead
2	Scientific name	Channa marulius
3	Colour	Dark brown to black with a whitish underbelly
4	Average length in m	Can grow up to 1.5 meters in length
5	Average weight in kgs	Can weigh up to 30 kilograms
6	Found in river systems of	Found in freshwater rivers, lakes, and reservoirs in South and Southeast Asia, including the Ganges-Brahmaputra river basin
7	Habitat	Prefers slow-moving and standing waters with muddy or rocky substrates
8	Any special characteristics	Has a long, cylindrical body with a large mouth and sharp teeth, and is able to breathe air through its swim bladder. Can survive in low-oxygen environments.

Features

Channa marulius, also known as the giant snakehead, is a predatory freshwater fish native to South and Southeast Asia.

Channa marulius typically has a dark brown or blackish-brown body with irregular lighter patches. The head and fins may have a reddish or orangish tint.

This species can grow up to 1.5 meters (5 feet) in length and

weigh up to 20 kilograms (44 pounds). However, it is more commonly found at lengths between 60-80 cm (2-2.5 feet) and weights between 4-7 kilograms (9-15 pounds).

The giant snakehead has a long, slender body with a broad, flat head and a large mouth filled with sharp teeth. *Channa marulius* is a voracious predator that feeds on a variety of prey, including fish, crustaceans, and even small mammals and birds. It is known to be highly aggressive and territorial and may attack humans if provoked. *Channa marulius* is a strong and fast swimmer, capable of reaching speeds of up to 15 km/h (9 mph).

Habitat

The giant snakehead prefers warm, slow-moving or stagnant water with plenty of vegetation for cover. It is often found in shallow water near the banks of rivers and lakes, and may be found in brackish water near the mouths of rivers or in coastal lagoons.

Channa marulius is capable of adapting to a wide range of environmental conditions and can survive in water with low oxygen levels. However, it is sensitive to pollution and changes in water quality, and may be negatively impacted by human activities such as dam construction, agricultural runoff, and industrial pollution.

However, it is worth noting that *Channa marulius* is considered an invasive species in some areas outside of its native range, and may have negative impacts on native fish and aquatic ecosystems. As such, it may be subject to regulations or restrictions in some regions.

River System

In India, the giant snakehead is found in various river

systems, including the Brahmaputra, Ganga, Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna, and Cauvery rivers, as well as their tributaries and associated wetlands. It is also found in other freshwater bodies such as lakes, ponds, and swamps.

Threatened Status

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the species is listed as “Least Concern” on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, which means that the population is stable and not currently facing any significant threats.

However, the species is still threatened by overfishing and habitat destruction in some parts of its range. In some areas, the species is targeted for its meat and is caught using unsustainable fishing practices such as dynamite and poison. Habitat loss due to deforestation, dam construction, and pollution also pose a threat to the species.