

# Spotted snakehead fish

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 Spotted Snakehead Fish, scientifically known as *Channa punctata*, is a freshwater fish species found in South and Southeast Asia, including India. It is a medium-sized fish that can grow up to 45 cm in length and weigh up to 1 kg. The fish has a distinctive pattern of black spots on its body, which gives it its common name. The Spotted Snakehead Fish is a voracious predator and feeds on a variety of aquatic animals, including fish, insects, and crustaceans. It is an important food fish in some regions and is also popular among anglers due to its hard-fighting nature. The fish has an elongated body, with a mottled brown coloration and a sharp-toothed mouth. It is a hardy species that can survive in a range of aquatic environments, including low-oxygen and stagnant water. However, like many other fish species, the Spotted Snakehead Fish is facing various threats such as

habitat loss and overfishing, leading to a decline in its population. Conservation efforts are being undertaken to protect the species, with a focus on sustainable fishing practices, habitat restoration, and education programs to raise awareness about the importance of preserving this unique and important aquatic resource.

<b>Serial No.</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Common name	Spotted snakehead fish
2	Scientific name	Channa punctata
3	Colour	Brown with dark spots and stripes
4	Average length in m	0.3 – 0.5 meters
5	Average weight in kgs	0.5 – 1 kilograms
6	Found in river systems of	Brahmaputra, Barak
7	Habitat	Freshwater habitats, such as rivers, streams, and ponds
8	Any special characteristics	Has a snake-like appearance and can breathe air using a specialized organ called a labyrinth organ.

## Features

The spotted snakehead fish, also known as the giant snakehead, is a freshwater fish species native to Southeast Asia. The spotted snakehead has a distinctive appearance, with a dark brown or black body covered in large, irregularly-shaped light-colored spots. The spots are most prominent on the upper half of the body and dorsal fin.

The spotted snakehead is a large fish that can grow up to 1.5 meters (5 feet) in length and weigh over 20 kilograms (44

pounds). However, most individuals caught by anglers are between 1-2 kilograms (2-4 pounds).

The spotted snakehead has a long, cylindrical body with a flattened head and a large, tooth-filled mouth. Its dorsal fin is long and runs the length of its back, and its anal fin is similarly elongated.

The spotted snakehead is a powerful swimmer and can move quickly through the water, especially when chasing prey. However, its exact swimming speed is not well documented.

It is a top predator and feeds on a variety of aquatic animals, including fish, crustaceans, and insects. It is also known for its aggressive behavior and is sometimes kept as a gamefish in recreational fisheries.

## **Habitat**

The spotted snakehead is a freshwater species that inhabits rivers, lakes, and swamps. It prefers standing water with abundant aquatic vegetation and submerged logs or other structure for cover. It is also capable of surviving in degraded or polluted habitats, making it adaptable to a wide range of aquatic environments.

## **River System**

In India, the spotted snakehead fish is found in several river systems, particularly in the northeastern part of the country. It is commonly found in the Brahmaputra River and its tributaries, such as the Dibang, Lohit, and Subansiri rivers. It is also found in the Barak River system in Assam and in the Ganges River system in West Bengal.

The spotted snakehead is an important fish species for both commercial and recreational fisheries in India, and is often targeted by anglers using lures, bait, or traditional fishing

methods. However, like in other parts of the world, the introduction of the spotted snakehead fish to new areas in India has raised concerns about its potential impacts on native fish species and ecosystems.

## **Threatened Status**

The spotted snakehead fish, also known as the giant snakehead, is not currently considered a threatened species. However, like many other freshwater fish species, it faces a range of threats to its populations in its native range, including habitat loss and degradation, overfishing, and the impacts of invasive species.

In addition, the spotted snakehead has been introduced to new areas outside of its native range, where it can have negative impacts on native fish populations and ecosystems. In some cases, it is considered an invasive species and efforts are being made to control or eliminate its populations in these areas.