

Snakehead, Bowfin, or Burbot

Know the difference

Snakehead

NON-NATIVE



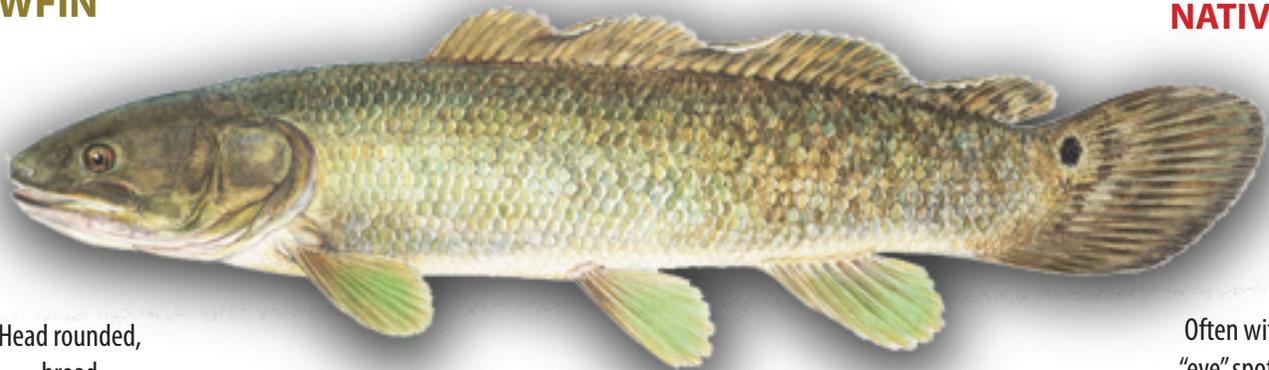
Head long, pointed and flattened

Pelvic fins beneath pectoral fins

Anal fin long (2/3 of the length of the dorsal fin)

Bowfin

NATIVE



Head rounded, broad

Lower fins often with greenish tint

Pelvic fins set back under dorsal fin

Anal fin short (less than 1/4 length of the dorsal fin)

Often with an "eye" spot near the tail

Burbot

Two distinct dorsal fins

NATIVE



Head flattened with chin barbel

Pelvic fins beneath pectoral fins

Anal fin long



wi.dnr.gov/fish

On the web:

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For more information on snakeheads or other nonnative fish

The Saga of the Snakehead in Wisconsin

In the early fall of 2003, an exotic snakehead was collected from the Rock River during routine fisheries surveys. Since that time, the DNR has received numerous reports of anglers catching snakeheads from around the state. Is it really a snakehead? Use the diagrams on the inside to find out.



Giant snakehead collected from the Rock River in 2003. The fish was likely released from an aquarium.

fold first

Snakeheads may be confused with several of our native fish species: bowfin (dogfish) and burbot.



fold second

Snakehead and bowfin body and fin shapes are very similar. However, there are two distinct differences:

- The snakehead's anal fin is long - about 2/3 the length of the dorsal fin, while the bowfin's anal fin is short - less than one quarter the length of the dorsal fin, and
- The snakehead's pelvic fins are found almost underneath the pectoral fins, while the bowfin's pelvic fins are set back from the pectoral fins.

The burbot, like the snakehead, has a long anal fin and pelvic fins actually in front of the pectoral fins, however the burbot has very fine scales and a conspicuous barbel under the chin.

(open for diagrams)