



Conservation, Ecology, and Management of Catfish: The Second International Symposium

Edited by P. H. Michaletz and V. H. Travnicek. American Fisheries Society. Bethesda, MD. 2011. 800 pages. US\$79.00 (hardcover)

This is the second publication in a series published by the American Fisheries Society devoted to catfish research, biology, and management, which was organized as a symposium

held in St. Louis, Missouri, in 2010 and builds upon the first symposium that was held in Davenport, Iowa, in 1998 (Irwin et al. 1999). The organizers of the second symposium stated that this was to “serve as an addendum to Catfish 2000” and “to cover the four corners of catfish science: catfish biology, ecology, management, and conservation” (p. xi). The book meets this standard easily. With 64 papers organized into nine sections (plenary, catfishes as sport fish, nongame catfishes, nonnative catfishes, movement and habitat use, sampling and population assessment, age and growth, behavior, and future directions), this publication covers these four corners and more.

The first section of the book covering the plenary session of the symposium consists of an introduction and three well-written, broad-based discussions of catfish ecology. Steve Quinn’s paper on human interactions goes beyond traditional hook-and-bullet views of catfish and even touches on mythology and lore of catfish in a variety of cultures. Jonathan Armbruster then discusses the global diversity of catfishes (37 families and over 3,400 species!) and his work on the National Science Foundation-funded All Catfish Species Inventory Project. Zeb Hogan concludes this section with an excellent discourse on large-bodied freshwater catfish and the alarming downward trend observed for many of these species. It is this section that I think will have the most broad-based appeal; the remainder of the book generally contains more specific information on a limited number of species.

Except for the plenary section and the section on nongame catfishes (eight papers covering mostly Madtoms and Bullheads but also the lone paper on a marine species), the book is largely a tome related to the biology and management of only three freshwater species in North America: Blue Catfish, Channel Catfish, and Flathead Catfish. Researchers working with one of these species will find valuable information on sampling techniques and tools for assessing population metrics

(11 studies using tandem hoop nets, gill nets, electrofishing, isotopic analyses, and even soap-on-a-rope), habitat use and movement (seven field-based studies in lotic systems and one laboratory-based study on interstice size selection), and impacts due to introductions outside of their native range (particularly how some species tolerate and invade saltwater habitats). It is for this group in particular that this book should become an indispensable resource.

In a review of the first catfish symposium, Ney (2001) noted that the title had a “tenuous claim to being ‘international’” (p. 66) because the vast majority of papers were focused on portions of the United States. And, except for one paper on Channel Catfish in the country of Georgia, even the seven papers in the nonnative section of this second symposium contained information on only the “big three” (i.e., Blue, Channel, and Flathead catfish) where they were nonnative to portions of the United States. Although the publication from this second symposium has improved on its international claim, room still seems to remain for improvement. The last paper, by Tom Kwak and others, acknowledges these issues, stating, “the majority of work on catfish taxonomy, genetics, behavior, and paleontology has been conducted outside of North America” (p. 764). If there is to be a third symposium and organizers heed the “international” shortcomings of the previous two, greater global representation should occur, which would benefit a wider array of scientists. Until then, this book, which is well organized and well edited, is still an excellent resource for those studying catfish in North America.

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