

# Brown bullhead catfish

## *Ameiurus nebulosus*

Introduced

Undesirable

Brown bullhead catfish were introduced in 1877 from the United States for unknown reasons. They lay approximately 6000 golden eggs (c. 3 millimetres) that are guarded by both parents, mostly the male. The brown bullhead catfish can easily be identified by the eight barbels around their mouths. They have sharp spines on their dorsal and pectoral fins so should be handled carefully to avoid injury.

Typically, Waikato catfish live for an average of three years, reach lengths of 270 millimetres and weigh approximately 0.3 kilograms. These fish were first recorded in Lake Taupō in 1985 and since then have spread down the Waikato River. They are also found in the Waihou and Piako Rivers. Their greatest impact in the Waikato River appears to be competition for benthic (river-bed) food and, with high numbers, degrading water quality due to feeding habits (re-suspending sediment). Catfish are a pest species in New Zealand that cannot be spread and must be killed on capture (Fisheries Regulations 2013).

