

Subject: : Warm Water & Salt Water Fly-Fishing

Topic: : Snakeheads

Re: Snakeheads

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Date: : 2012/8/20 20:49:29

URL:

Whoa, whoa, whoa. Before anyone starts killing snakeheads they should be darn sure that they can tell the difference between the candidate species (for threatened status), the native bowfin, and the northern snakehead. Almost every fish reported to me statewide as having been killed or held live for identification has been a bowfin, not a snakehead. That has been especially true in the Bucks County portion of the Delaware and its tributaries. I have had at least four other species of fish reported to me by well-meaning anglers as being snakeheads. Bowfins are present in ponds, lakes, rivers, and streams. Before acting, check the Virginia fisheries web page for a very good comparison of the two species. Note, however, do not use the spot in the tail or lack thereof as a deciding factor.....female bowfin have the spot, males don't. Finally, the best characteristic for amateurs is the simplest, and it does not appear on web sites. A bowfin has no scales on the top of its head; it is a skinhead, just like a catfish. A snakehead has a mosaic pattern of larger scales on top of its head, just like a snake.