

**Black Bullhead (*Ameiurus melas*)****Status: NSS3; NatureServe G5 S5****Abundance:** Unknown

**Introduction:** Body is stout; caudal fin is only slightly notched; and body is scaleless. Black bullhead are very hardy and are sometimes used to provide a source of recreational fishing in Wyoming's warm and turbid waters that tend to be unsuitable for other fish. They prefer to feed on aquatic invertebrates and some small fish, but it's been said that they will eat almost anything digestible, including carrion. Eggs are laid in a nest or depression, or are sometimes attached to aquatic plants. Either the male or female adult bullhead will guard the nest, and once hatched, the fry continue to be escorted by the adult. Young fish will often remain in small schools for some time after the adult escort is discontinued. In Wyoming, maximum size is about one-half pound.

**Habitat:** Although it prefers small muddy lakes, the black bullhead can also be found in pools in rivers and small streams. Wyoming's relatively cool waters provide only marginal habitat for this fish. In Wyoming, black bullheads are found most often in the north and northeastern counties of the state, east of the Continental Divide. This catfish ranges from New York to the Rocky Mountains and from Manitoba to Tennessee. It's also been introduced to areas in the southern and western United States. Whether black bullhead are actually native to Wyoming is currently under discussion.

**Problems:**

There are no immediate concerns for the black bullhead in Wyoming. Populations appear to be stable wherever suitable habitat exists. Their NSS ranking of "3" is based on the assumption of being native in Wyoming, and potential [anthropogenic](#) threats to their limited habitats.

**Conservation Actions:**

- Monitoring protocols and sites should be identified and routinely sampled.
- Determination of their status as native needs to be clarified.

**References and Additional Reading:**

Baxter, G.T., and M.D. Stone. 1995. Fishes of Wyoming. Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Cheyenne. 290pp.

# Black Bullhead Distribution

