

Catfishin' Fun



By Storm W. Usrey
Conservation Education Manager

Fishing Licenses

Licenses, stamps and validations may be purchased online: www.onlinesales.wildlife.state.nm.us, toll-free: 1-888-248-6866, and over the counter at any license vendor or NMDGF office.

License Type	Resident	Nonresident
Annual Fishing	\$25.00	\$56.00
One-day Fishing	\$12.00	\$12.00
Five-day Fishing	\$24.00	\$24.00
Junior Annual Fishing (age 12–17)	\$5.00	\$15.00
Senior Annual Fishing (age 65–69)	\$8.00	NA
70 Years and Older Annual Fishing	NC	NA
A free license is available to New Mexico residents only and does not require a Habitat Stamp, Habitat Management & Access Validation or Second Rod Validation. If obtained at a license vendor, a \$1 vendor fee may apply.		
Handicapped Annual Fishing	\$8.00	NA
Second Rod Validation	\$4.00	\$4.00
Game-hunting & Fishing	\$30.00	NA
Squirrel and game birds (other than turkey) and fishing		
Junior Game-hunting & Fishing	\$15.00	NA
Squirrel and game birds (other than turkey) and fishing		
Senior and Handicapped Game-hunting & Fishing	\$20.00	NA
Disabled Veteran Game-hunting & Fishing	\$10.00	NA
Habitat Stamp	\$5.00	\$5.00
Mandatory on all U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management properties.		

Habitat Management & Access Validation (HMAV) \$4.00 \$4.00
 Not required for individuals 17 years of age and younger or in conjunction with any free fishing license or privilege (page 4). HMAV does not replace the Habitat Stamp.

Gila Trout Fishing Permit NC NC
 Free for select locations, page 3.

OTC License Reprint (if license is lost or destroyed) NC NC
 If obtained at a license vendor, a \$1 vendor fee may apply.

A vendor fee of \$1 per transaction applies for all purchases.

NA = Not Available.

NC = No Charge.

Free Fishing Days in New Mexico are typically the first Saturday of June and the last Saturday of September. Please refer to the current Fishing Rules & Information Booklet to confirm. For any licensing questions, feel free to call 1-888-248-6866.

** images are current as of the 2020/2021 license year.

Bag Limits

Catfish (all species, except bullheads and Special Summer Catfish) 15 per day
In the Animas River and San Juan River, San Juan County, there are no bag or possession limits.

All other warmwater game fish 20 per day
(bluegill, sunfish, bullheads)

Special Summer Catfish Waters

Many small lakes and ponds are stocked from May–September with 17-inch or longer channel catfish. These waters offer great opportunities throughout the summer to catch big catfish. To make these unique angling opportunities possible, reduced bag limits have been established on these waters. Trotlines may not be used in Special Summer Catfish Waters.

Special Summer Catfish Waters 2 per day
Special catfish limit applies to: Alto Lake, Alumni Pond, Bataan, Blue Hole Park Pond, Bosque Redondo, Carrizozo, Chaparral, Conoco Lake, Corona, Dennis Chavez Pond, Escondida, Estancia Park Lake, Eunice, Grants Riverwalk Pond, Greene Acres, Green Meadow, Jal Lake, Lake Van, Liam Knight Pond, McGaffey Lake, Ned Houk, Oasis State Park, Pecos River within Villanueva State Park, Perch Lake, Rancho Grande Ponds, Roswell Kid’s Pond (Spring River Park), Timberon Ponds, Tingley Beach and Young Pond.

The possession limit for each species is twice the daily bag limit.

Special Summer Catfish Waters: The possession limit is four fish.

Locations to fish

- Locations along the Rio Grande can be found from San Acacia to Caballo Lake. Just remember that you cannot go onto private land without written permission. A GPS with a land status program is a good tool to use in conjunction with maps.
- Favorite spots can be San Acacia, San Marcial, Escondida Lake is great during summer months and is a Special Catfish Water for Channel Catfish, Elephant Butte, Caballo Lake and fishing is permitted on Bosque del Apache.
 - Always think about safety and plan your trip accordingly. At times the river can be running very fast and deep.
 - Best times to catfish are the summer months.
 - Sunscreen and mosquito spray are a must in the summer.

Operation Game Thief

If you see anything illegal in regards to wildlife, please contact Operation Game Thief at 1-800-432-4263.

On Bosque del Apache, you can also call 575-835-1828.

USFWS Federal Officer Ben Lanford.....575-518-8098
(Bosque del Apache)

NMDGF Sgt. Logan Vanlandingham.....505-999-9211
(Supervisor for Socorro Supervisory District)

NMDGF Corporal Jake Baulch.....505-252-6712
(T or C)

NMDGF Officer Jake Morales.....505-551-2182
(T or C)

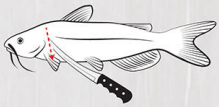
NMDGF Officer Drew Vanliew....505-309-1647
(Socorro)



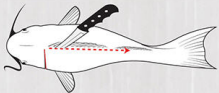
Filleting Catfish

FILLET TECHNIQUE FOR CATFISH

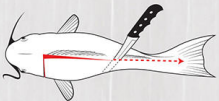
BLUE, CHANNEL,
FLATHEAD, LARGER
BULLHEADS



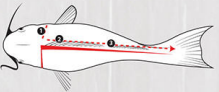
1 | Hold the catfish's head down against the board with your gloved hand. Catfish have a round profile, so holding them securely in place can be tricky. Be careful and avoid the spines in their fins. With the curved portion of the blade, a couple of inches back from the tip, make a cut from above the top of the gill plate down and back on a straight line that comes behind the pectoral fin. Make the cut in one slice, pulling the knife handle back toward you. Use care not to cut through the backbone, only down to it.



2 | Insert the knife into the top of the fish perpendicular to the top of your first cut, being sure to stay on the same side of the backbone. Use the fins as a guide for a straight cut. Slice back toward the rear of the catfish down to the top of the rib cage, but not through it. Carefully feel the tip of the knife bouncing across the top of each rib.



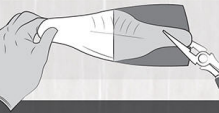
3 | At the back of the rib cage, push the knife all the way through the catfish and continue cutting using the backbone as a guide. You can either (A) cut all the way back to separate the fillet or (B) stop short, and with the fillet still attached, fold the fillet back on the cutting surface with the skin acting as a hinge. (You may wish to do this on larger catfish or ones that have been dead for a while as the skin on these is more difficult to remove.)



4 | (A) If you've separated the fillet, flip the catfish over and repeat on the process on the other side. (B) If you've left the fillet attached, use the fish itself for a grip and slide the knife between the skin and the flesh. This is where the extremely sharp, flexible blade of the fillet knife is critical. Flexing the blade so it is flat with the skin and the cutting board, slide the knife toward the front of the fillet separating it from the skin. Then flip the catfish over and repeat the process on the other side.



5 | With the two skin-on fillets separated from the catfish, lay a fillet skin side down on the cutting board. Hold the tail or the very back edge of the fillet with your off hand, and carefully slide the edge of the knife between the flesh and the skin. Flexing the blade so it is flat with the skin and the cutting board, slide the knife toward the front of the fillet separating it from the skin.



Note: Removing skin from catfish can be difficult. If your knife is not razor sharp, an alternative method is to use pliers to grasp the skin and peel it away from the filets.

Lots of information can be found on the internet. “Scarring” the skin with a sharp knife and peeling the skin with a set of needle-nose pliers works best for many people. The filets can then be removed by keeping your knife along the edge of the bones. Just remember you will need needle-nose pliers, a sharp knife, a cutting board, Ziploc bags, an ice chest with ice, water and paper towels.

EQUIPMENT

CUTTING BOARD - the bigger the better. Surface should be smooth to allow for easiest skinning and cleaning.

VACUUM SEALER - for any filets you're not going to cook and eat immediately, vacuum sealing is by far the best way to preserve quality in the freezer for the longest time.

TRASH RECEPTACLE - for offal.

FILLET KNIFE - must have a flexible blade that will hold its edge. Grip of hard material such as wood, plastic, etc. is desirable as it provides the best feel. Some filleting techniques especially require “feel” which soft grips inhibit. Shorter blades are also more sensitive, but for filleting it's better to have a blade that's too long rather than too short; 8- to 10-inch blades are most common.

FILLETING GLOVE - the same kind of glove used in commercial meat processing prevents nicks and cuts to the off hand and enhances grip on slippery fish and filets.

SOURCES:

PAUL POWIS, BASS PRO SHOPS, THUNDERMIST LURES



Credit: Bass Pro Shop

Recipes



Baked Catfish

Again, lots of information on the web with great recipes. You can bake or fry your fillets. The main thing is to take care of your meat, find a recipe and have fun!

If you share any of your catch with family and friends, make sure to give them a letter with your contact information, license number, what you have given them and when and where you caught your fish.



Fried Catfish