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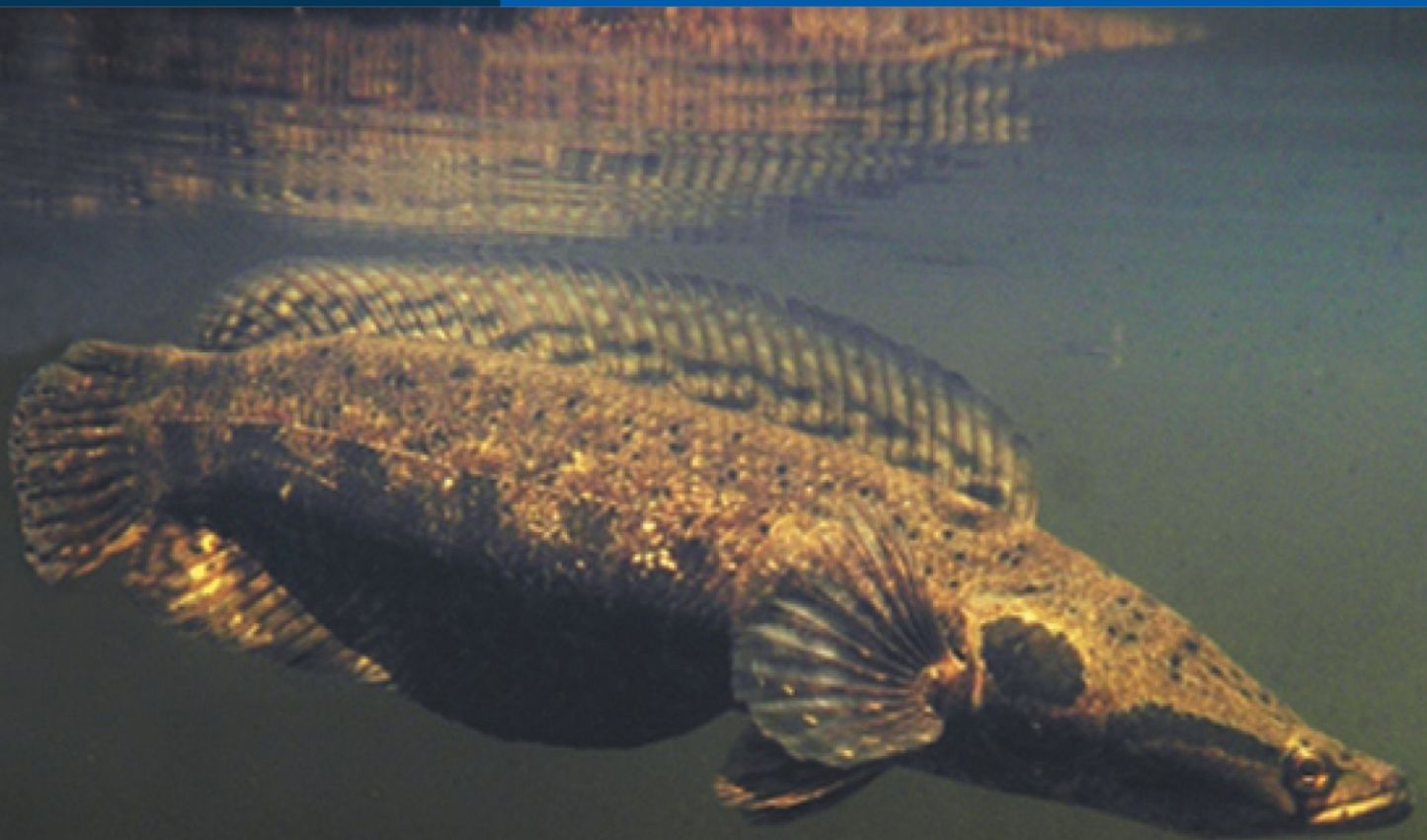
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*Channa lucius* (Cuvier, 1831) - Rayong, Thailand



Upper:Dwarf snakehead, *Channa cf. gachua* (Hamilton, 1822) Petchaburi, West Thailand  
 Lower:Striped snakehead, *Channa striata* (Bloch, 1793) Rayong, East Thailand  
 Photos by Ekkapan Ubonrach

**Biodiversity of Snakeheads genus *Channa* Scopoli 1777 in Thailand.** The family Channidae comprises more than 30 species of freshwater fishes (Snakeheads) and two extant genera, *Parachanna* Teugels et Daget, 1984 (Africa), and *Channa* Scopoli, 1777 (Asia: South Asia to the Far East). In Thailand, the genus *Channa* includes 6 species, *C. lucius* (Cuvier, 1831), *C. marulius* (Hamilton, 1822), *C. melasoma* (Bleeker, 1851), *C. micropeltes* (Cuvier, 1831), *C. striata* (Bloch, 1793) and *C. cf. gachua* (Hamilton, 1822). However, many of them still have an unclear taxonomic status, especially the populations of Mekong Basin. Snakeheads can be found mostly in all regions of Thailand, except for Black snakehead (*C. melasoma*) that occurs only in the southern part of the country. Their habitat embraces head water streams and mainstreams or flood areas such as canals, rice fields, swamps or still waters. Some species, i.e. Black snakehead (*C. melasoma*), Giant snakehead (*C. micropeltes*) and Striped snakehead (*C. striata*), can also live in peat swamps or acidic waters. Dwarf snakehead (*C. cf. gachua*) can be found only in mountain-stream ecosystem; moreover, all snakeheads can live in waters with low oxygen levels thanks to supra-branchial organs in circulatory system which can enable fish to air-breathing. This ability can be helpful for hibernating underground during the dry season. Snakeheads, in Thailand, occur all year round but reproduction period is only in rainy or flood season. Striped snakehead (*C. striata*), Blotched snakehead (*C. lucius*), Bullseye snakehead (*C. marulius*), Black snakehead (*C. melasoma*) and Giant snakehead (*C. micropeltes*) show nesting behavior prior to breeding time. Fish use caudal fin to swing or waving on aquatic plants to build the nest, but nesting patterns are different in each species: eggs are laid into the nest and one parent or both will take care of them to the juvenile stage. Only Dwarf snakehead (*C. cf. gachua*) has a mouth-brooding behavior. Snakeheads are top-level predators, including also cannibalism.

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