

Name _____



The Life Cycle of a Catfish

The life cycle of a catfish is full of fascinating changes, from its early days as an egg to its life as a fully grown adult. These remarkable fish can live anywhere from 8 to 20 years, depending on the species and the environment.

The first stage of a catfish's life begins as an egg. Female catfish lay hundreds or even thousands of eggs in a safe spot, like a hole or under a rock. The male

catfish guards the eggs until they hatch, which takes about 5 to 10 days. During this time, the eggs develop quickly, especially in warm water. Once the eggs hatch, the tiny baby catfish are called fry.

Fry are very small and fragile. At this stage, they rely on their yolk sacs for nutrition, which helps them grow stronger in their first few days of life. As they grow, fry start to swim and search for food, eating tiny plants and animals in the water. Fry are especially vulnerable to predators, so many do not survive to the next stage.

The second stage is called the juvenile stage. At this point, the young catfish are stronger and more independent. They begin to look more like adult catfish, with barbels (whisker-like feelers) and smooth, scaleless skin. Juvenile catfish spend their time exploring their habitat, searching for food, and avoiding predators. This stage lasts until they are fully grown, which can take a few months to several years, depending on the species.

The final stage is adulthood. Adult catfish are larger and better equipped to survive in their environment. They spend much of their time feeding on plants, insects, and small fish. Adult catfish are also ready to reproduce, starting the life cycle all over again. In the wild, catfish play an important role in keeping their ecosystems healthy by cleaning up dead plants and animals from the water.

From egg to adult, the life of a catfish is full of challenges and growth. Each stage of their life helps them develop the skills they need to survive and thrive in their aquatic homes.