

So What's the Big Deal about Flathead Catfish?

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Photo Philadelphia Water Department, 2002



They can grow
to be very big!


Flathead catfish (*Pylodictes olivaris*)

Under Ideal conditions, they can grow to over 45 kg (100 lbs.)

(Young fish pictured is about 35 cm in length)



Photo: Rob Criswell

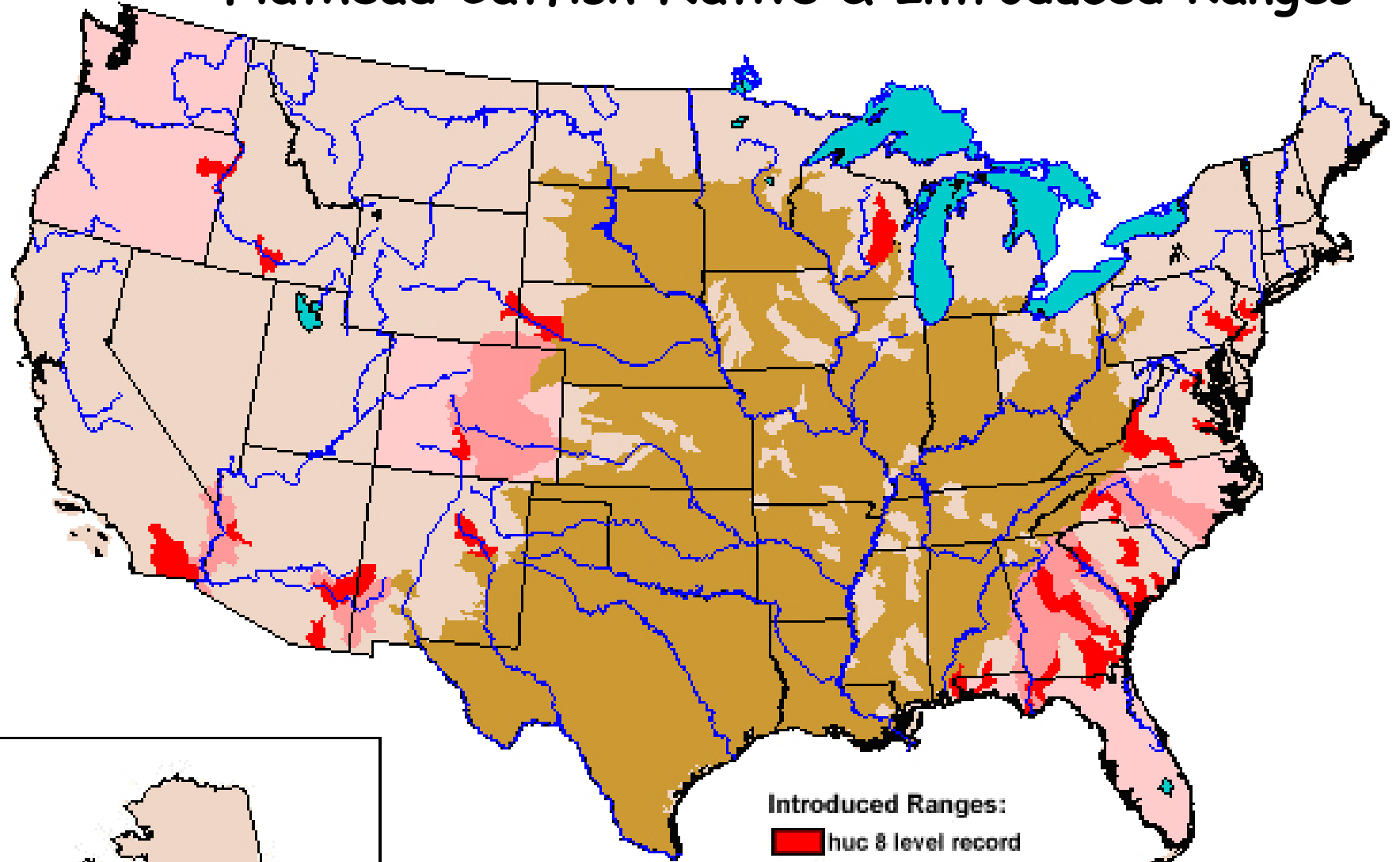


I can eat
a lot of
native fish!

Native to Western Pennsylvania,
Introduced in Eastern Pennsylvania



Flathead Catfish Native & Introduced Ranges

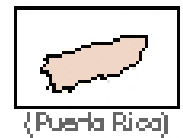


Introduced Ranges:

-  huc 8 level record
-  huc 6 level record
-  non-specific state record

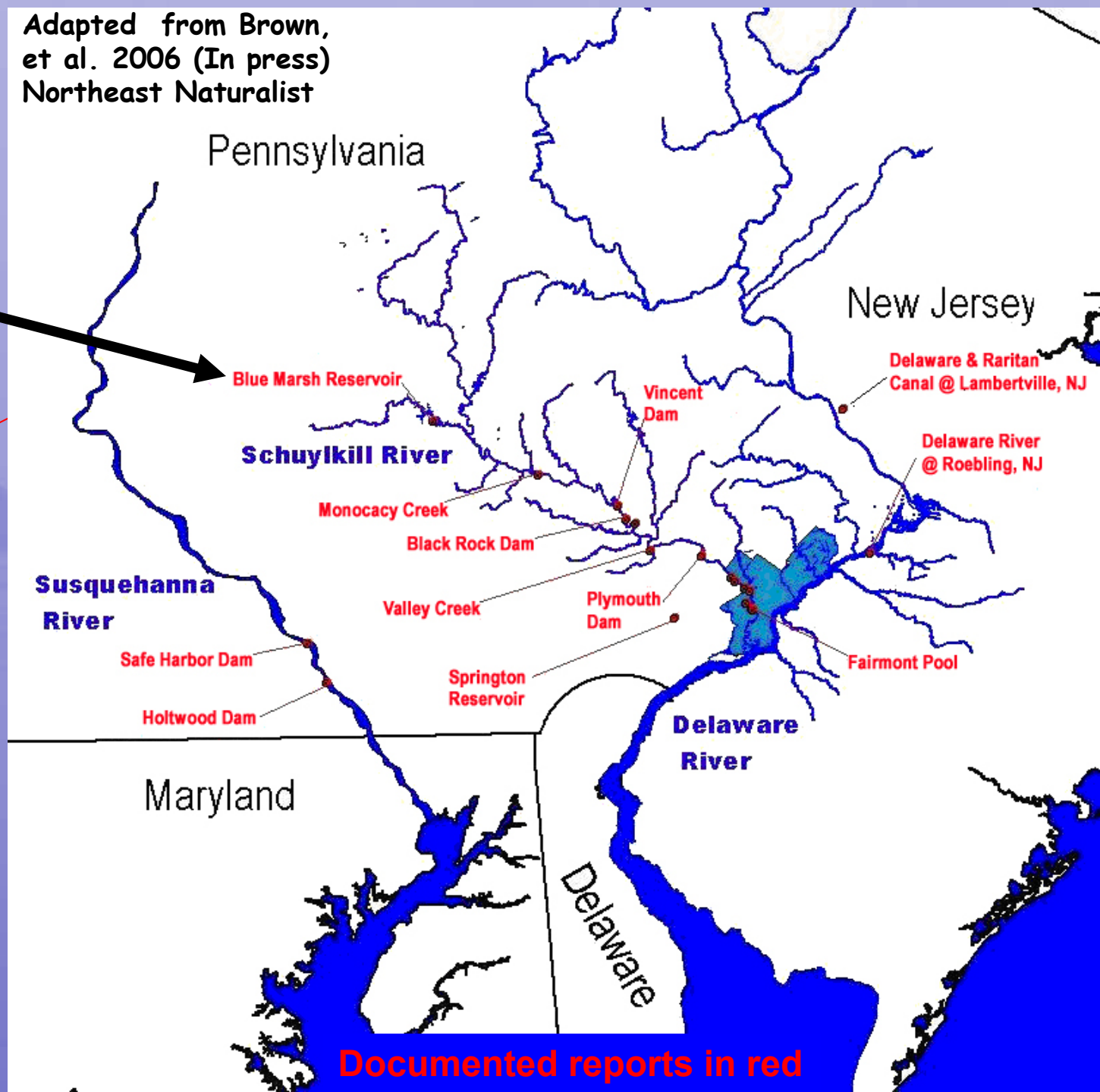
Native Ranges:

-  provided by 



Adapted from Brown,
et al. 2006 (In press)
Northeast Naturalist

- First found in the Delaware in Blue Marsh Reservoir in 1997
- First reported in the Susquehanna in 1991
- None knows how they got there - perhaps along with channel catfish stocking



Many flatheads are found at the bottom of the Fairmount Fish Ladder when it's drained for cleaning





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Young flatheads collected in the Schuylkill River indicate successful reproduction



Photo: Rob Criswell

Studies of introduced flatheads in other watersheds found:

- They can establish very high densities
- They can range long distances in a short amount of time
- They greatly reduced mid-sized native fish
 - Redbreast sunfish
 - Bullheads
 - Migratory fish
- Difficult to control
- May have caused a drop in some Schuylkill River fish in 2004

Health Risks

- Like other predacious fish, flathead meat can to accumulate chemical contaminants like PCBs
- The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania advises eating no more that one meal a month of flatheads caught in the Lower Schuylkill River

How will flathead catfish impact Delaware & Susquehanna fish?

- Will they reduce native species?
 - Sunfish?
 - Bullheads?
 - Shad?
 - Eel?
 - Crayfish?





Stay
tuned!

Acknowledgements

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