



Profile of the Current Non-Asian Carp Commercial Fishing Industry on the Illinois River

**Rob Maher
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Division of Fisheries
Commercial Fishing Project Manager**

Historic Accounts of Fish Abundance from the Illinois River

- 1682 – Henry de Tony built Fort St. Louis at Starved Rock in the winter of 1682-1683. The French hoped it would become a center of operations for a fur-trading empire. One catfish caught in the Illinois River was “of enormous size, furnishing enough meat for a supper for twenty two men.” – Henry de Tony
- 1702 – Pierre Delliete, a French fur trader, reported that the Illinois River “has a great abundance of fish.” In good weather, an Illinois Indian could spear “as many as sixty of them in a day.”
- 1880's – The common carp, a food fish in Europe, was introduced to the Illinois River. The carp spread quickly in the river. “From the information I can get as an official of the Illinois Commercial Fisherman's Association from all points along the Illinois River, the carp have brought in more money than the catch of all other fish combined. Long live the carp!” – Captain John A. Schulte
- 1908 – More than **2,000 commercial fishermen** harvested in excess of **20 million pounds of fish**. They produced 10% of the nation's freshwater fish from the river between Hennepin and Grafton.

STATE OF ILLINOIS

Adlai E. Stevenson, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF REGISTRATION AND EDUCATION

C. Hobart Engle, Director

COMMERCIAL FISHERIES OF ILLINOIS RIVERS:

A Statistical Report for 1950

William C. Starrett and Sam A. Parr



Biological Notes No. 95

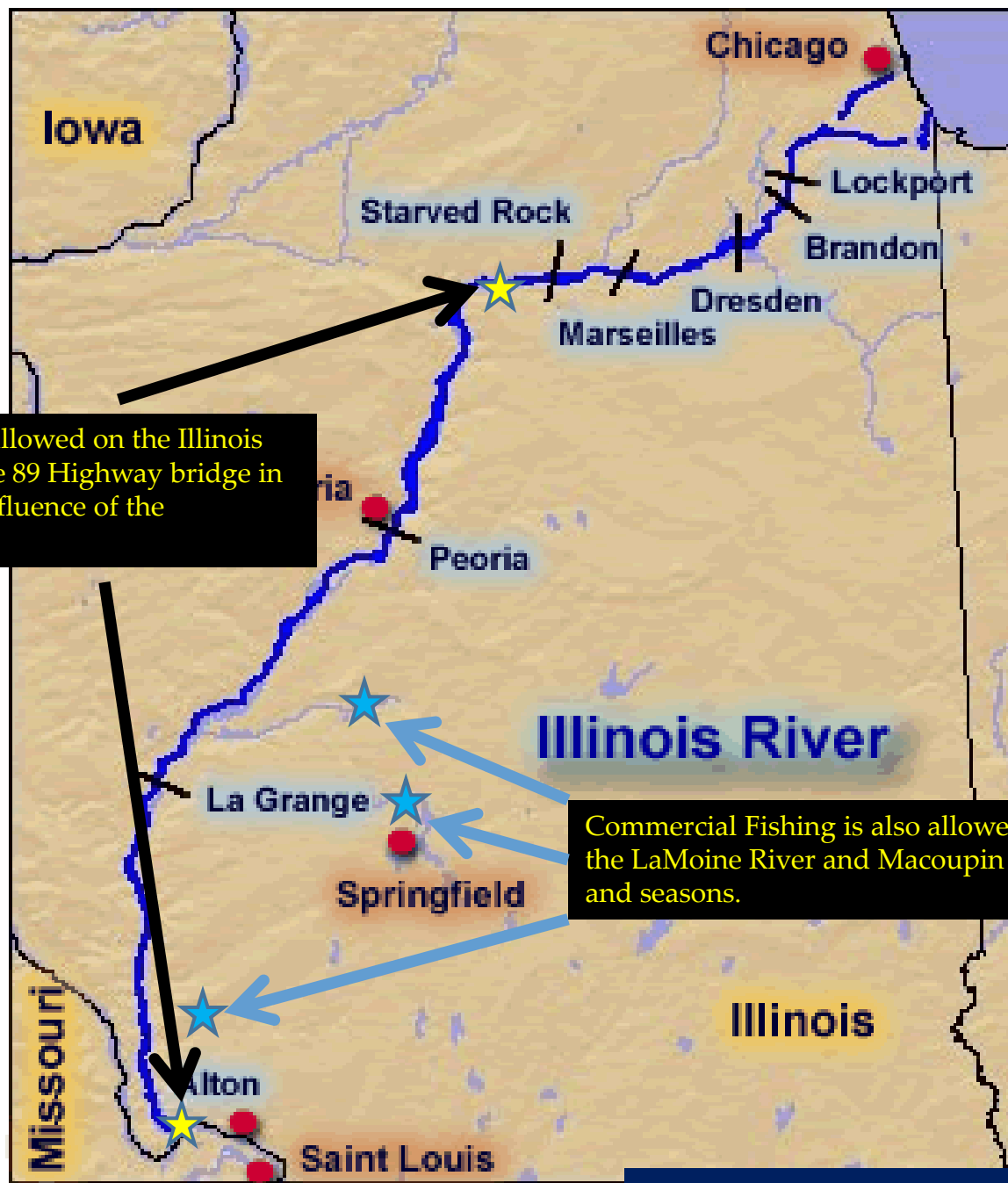
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NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY DIVISION

Barlow B. Mills, Chief

Urbana, Illinois

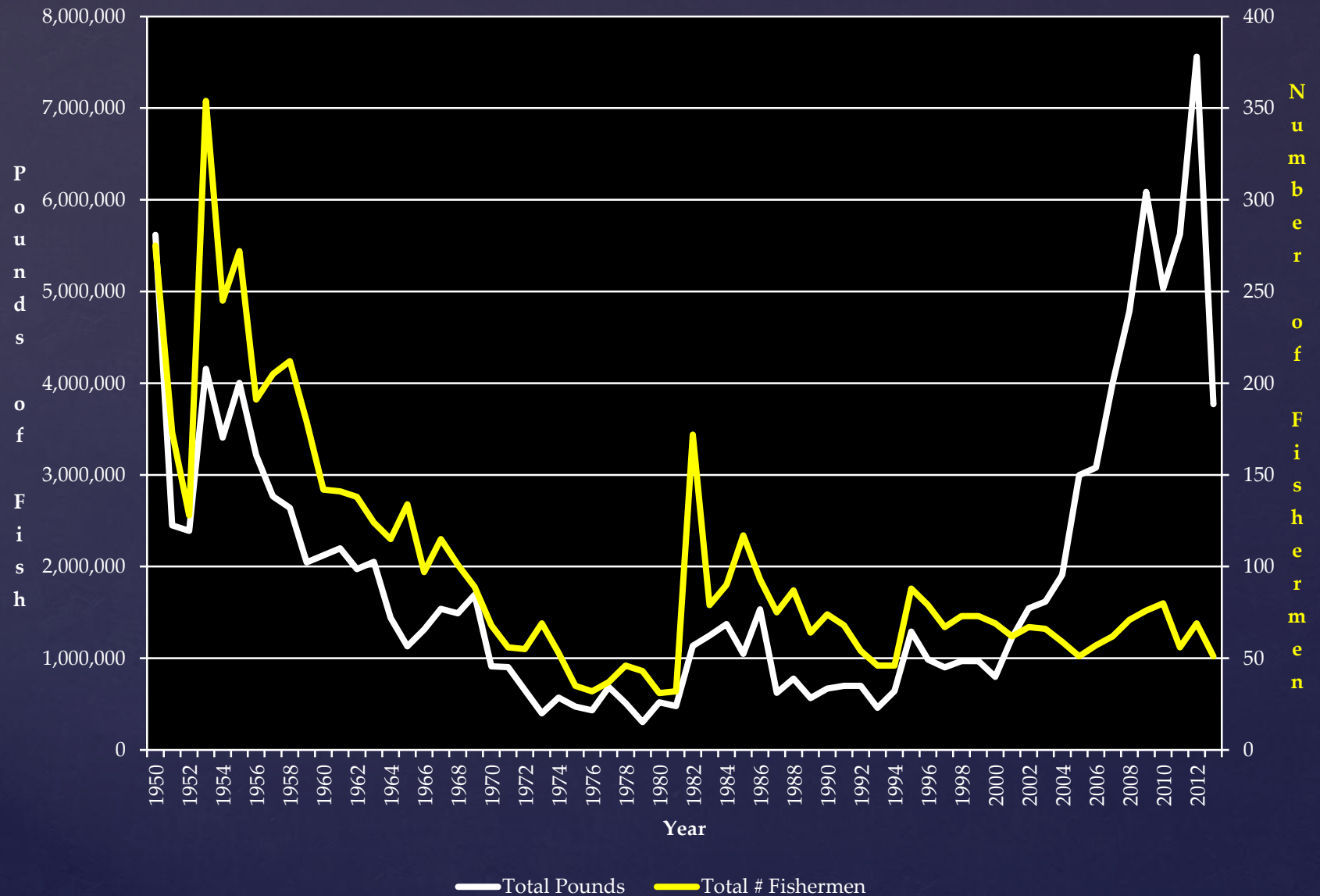
November, 1951



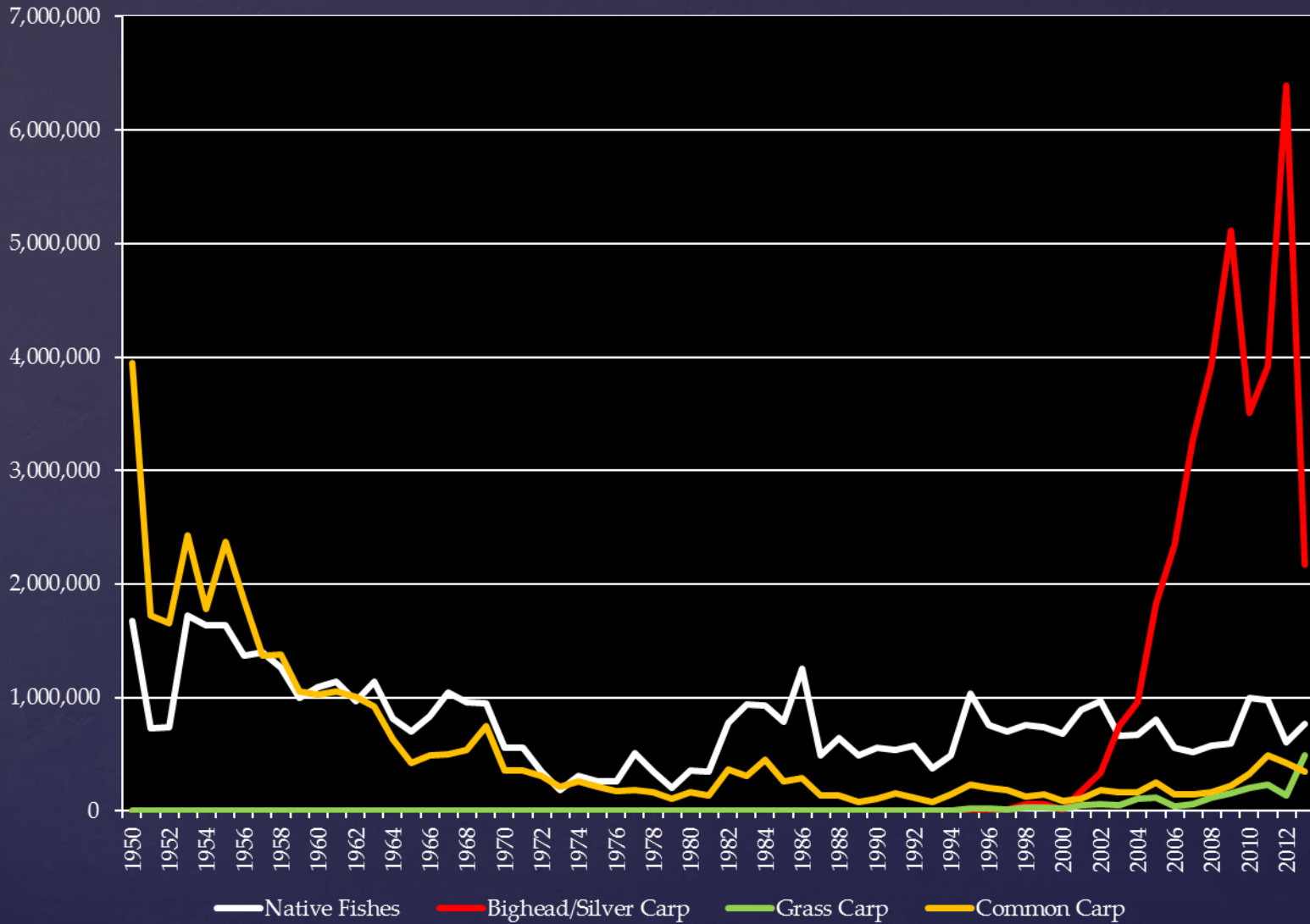
Commercial Fishing is allowed on the Illinois River between the Route 89 Highway bridge in Spring Valley to the confluence of the Mississippi River

Commercial Fishing is also allowed in the Sangamon River, the LaMoine River and Macoupin Creek with limited gears and seasons.

Trends in the Number of Fishermen and Total Reported Commercial Fish Harvest

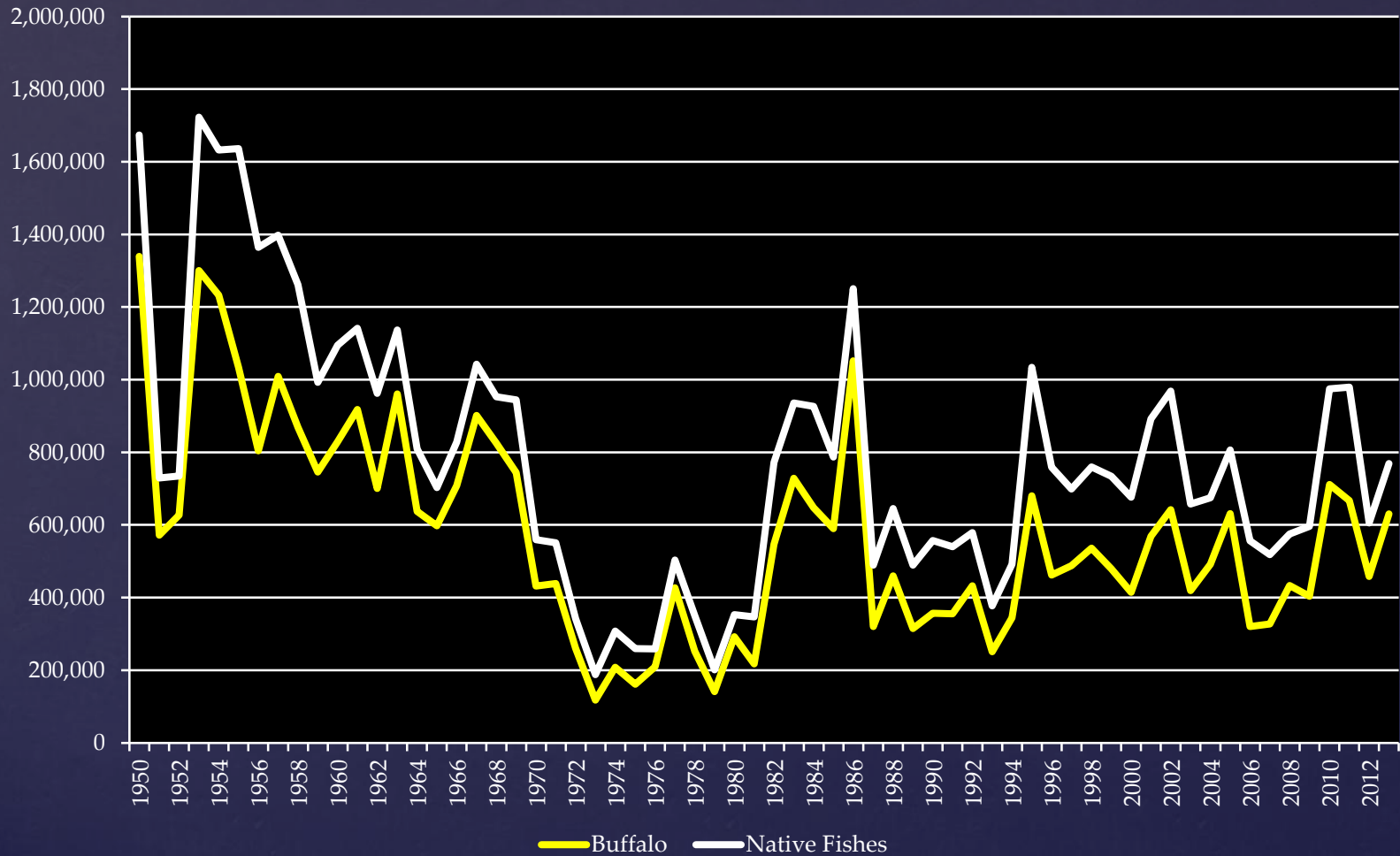


Pounds of Commercially Harvested Fishes Reported from the Illinois River



Native fishes comprised of 18 different species

Contribution of Buffalo to the Total Commercial Catch of Native Fishes on the Illinois River



Three species of buffalo found in the Illinois River



Bigmouth Buffalo

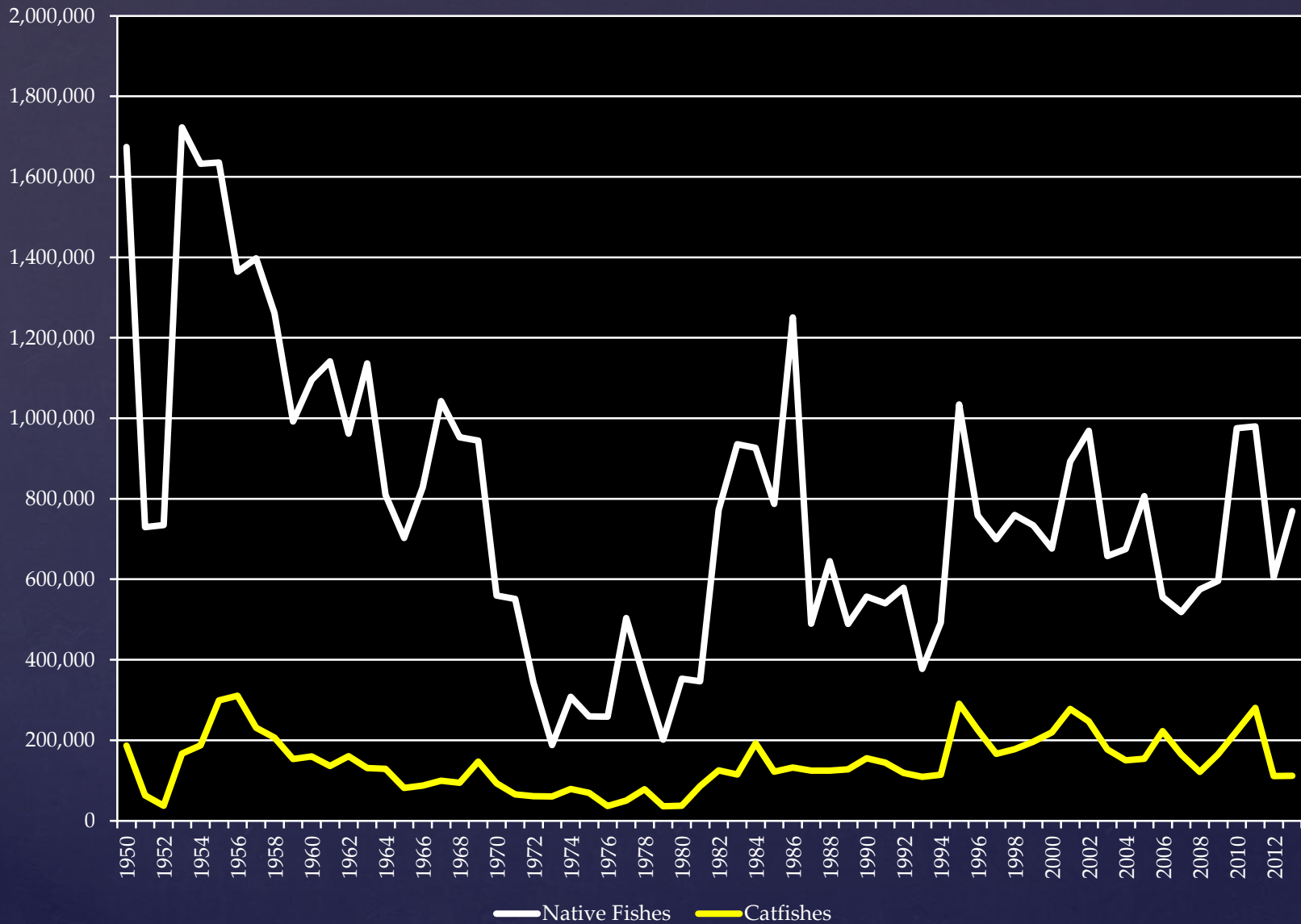


Smallmouth Buffalo



Black Buffalo

Contribution of the Catfishes to the Total Commercial Catch of Native Fishes on the Illinois River



Channel Catfish caught in a hoop net on the Illinois River



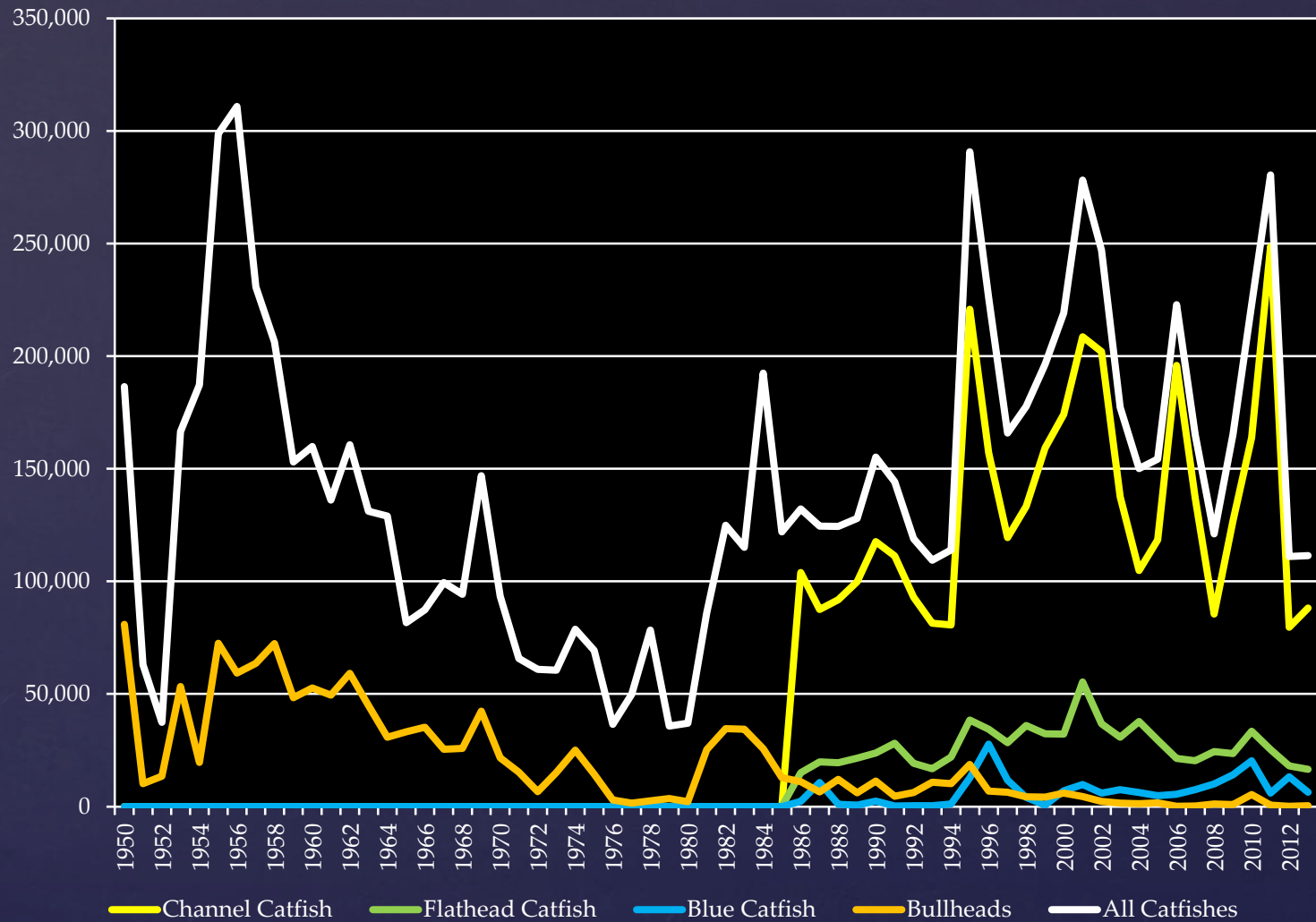
Two cubs fans and a flathead catfish



Blue Catfish caught in a hoop net on the Illinois River



Composition of Commercial Catfish Catch on the Illinois River



Channel, Flathead and Blue Catfish were not reported as separate species until 1986

Caviar Bearing Fishes



Paddlefish

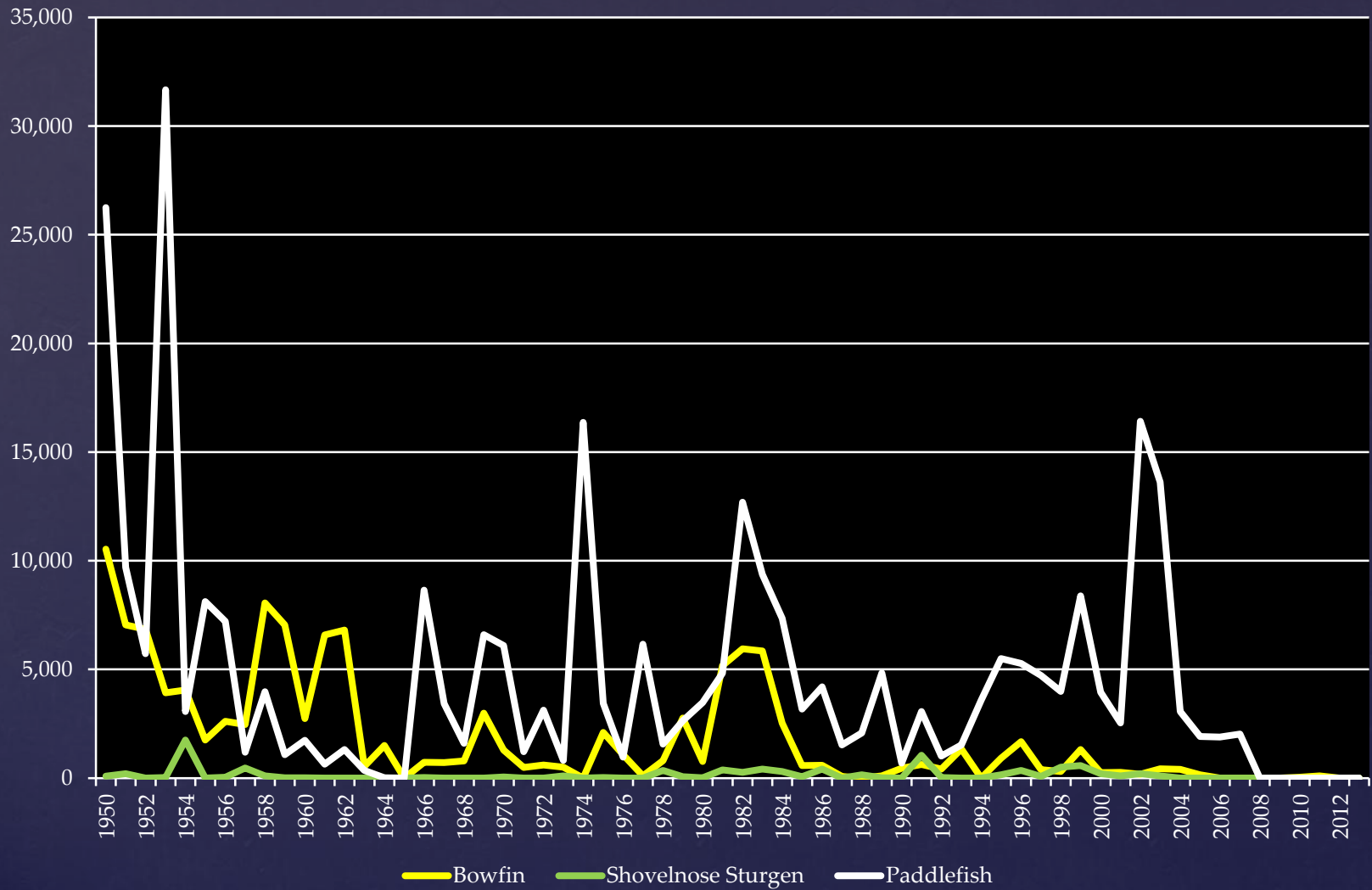


Shovelnose Sturgeon

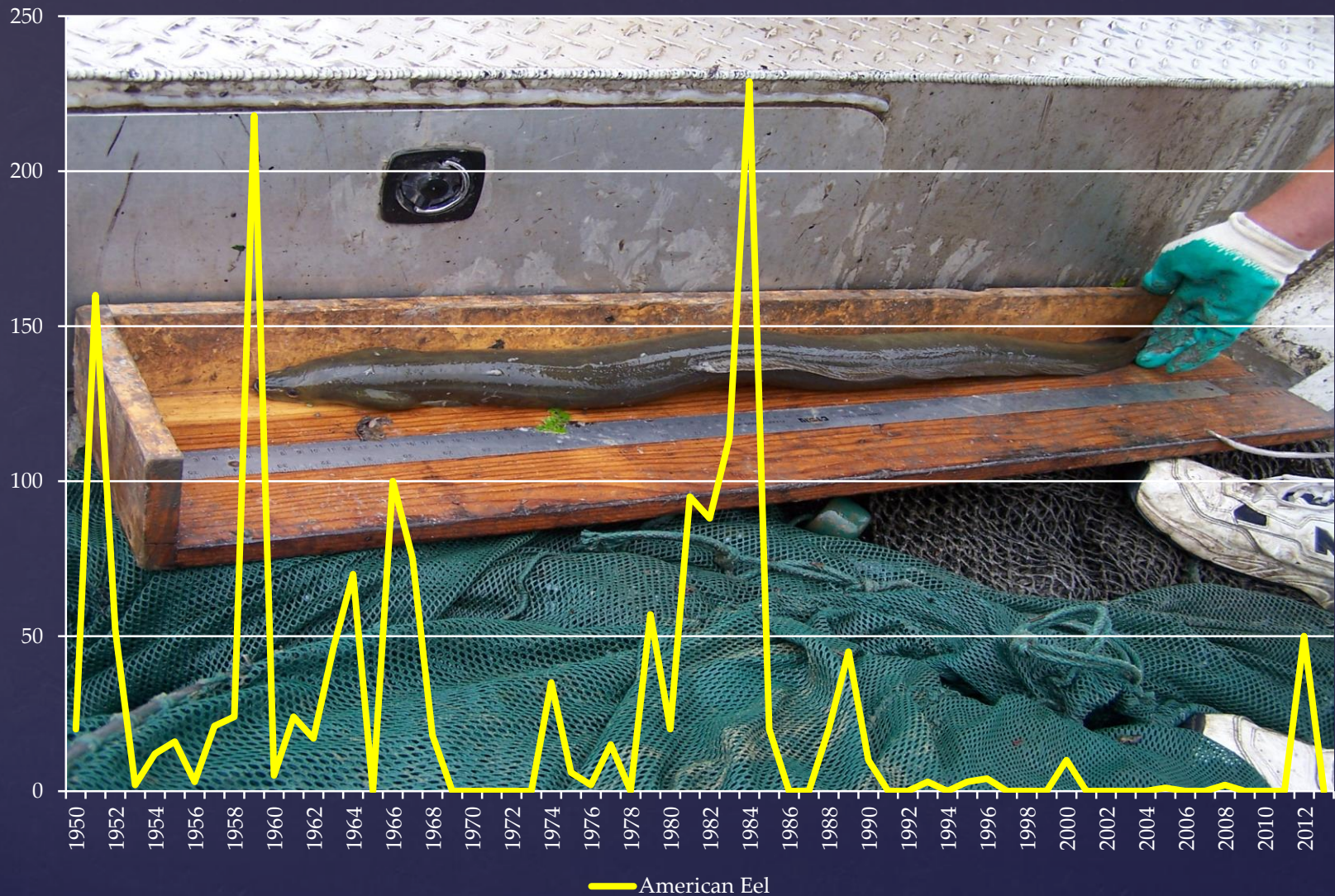


Bowfin

Trends in the Reported Harvest of Caviar Bearing Fishes from the Illinois River

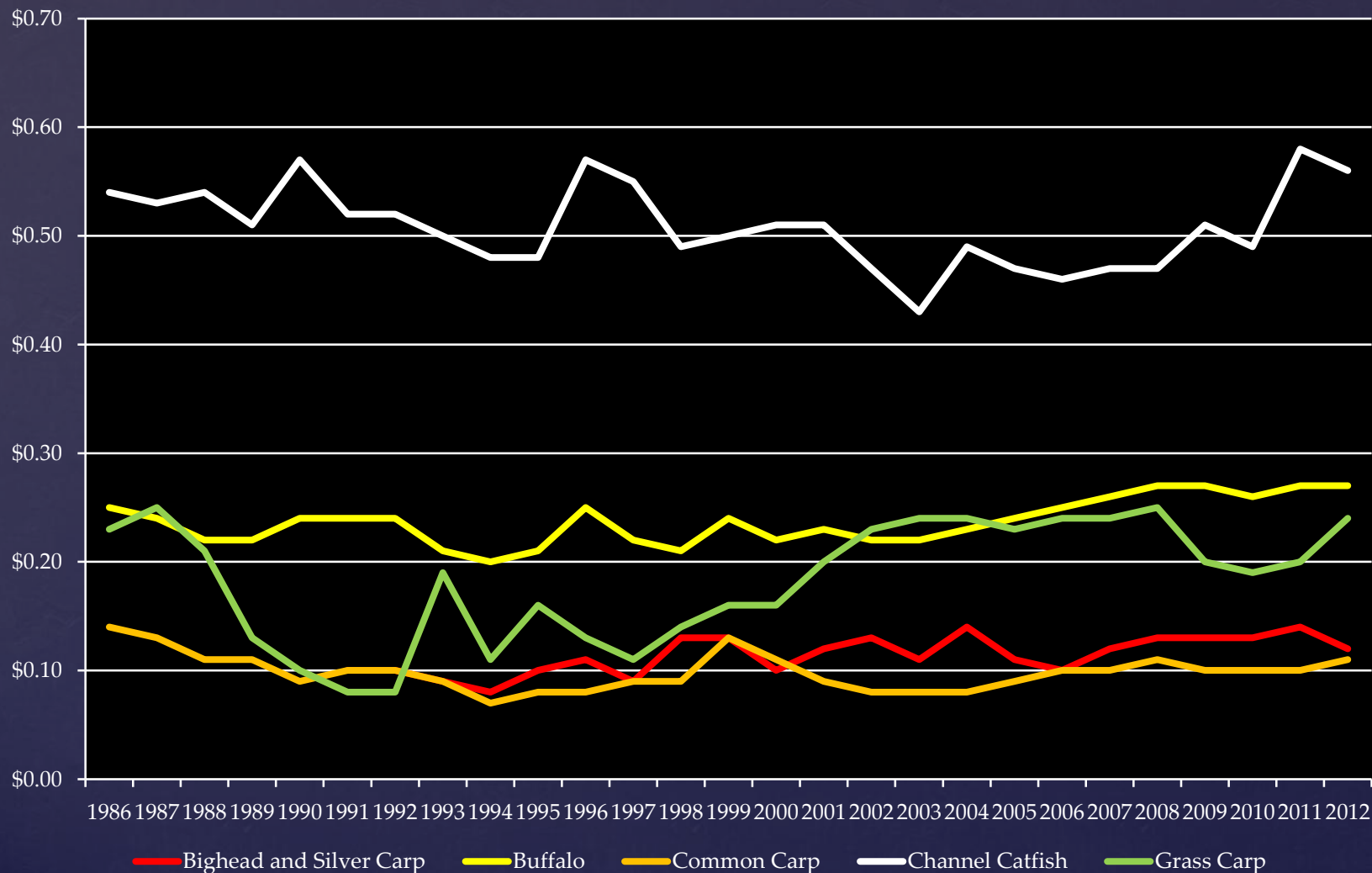


Pounds of American Eel Reported from the Illinois River



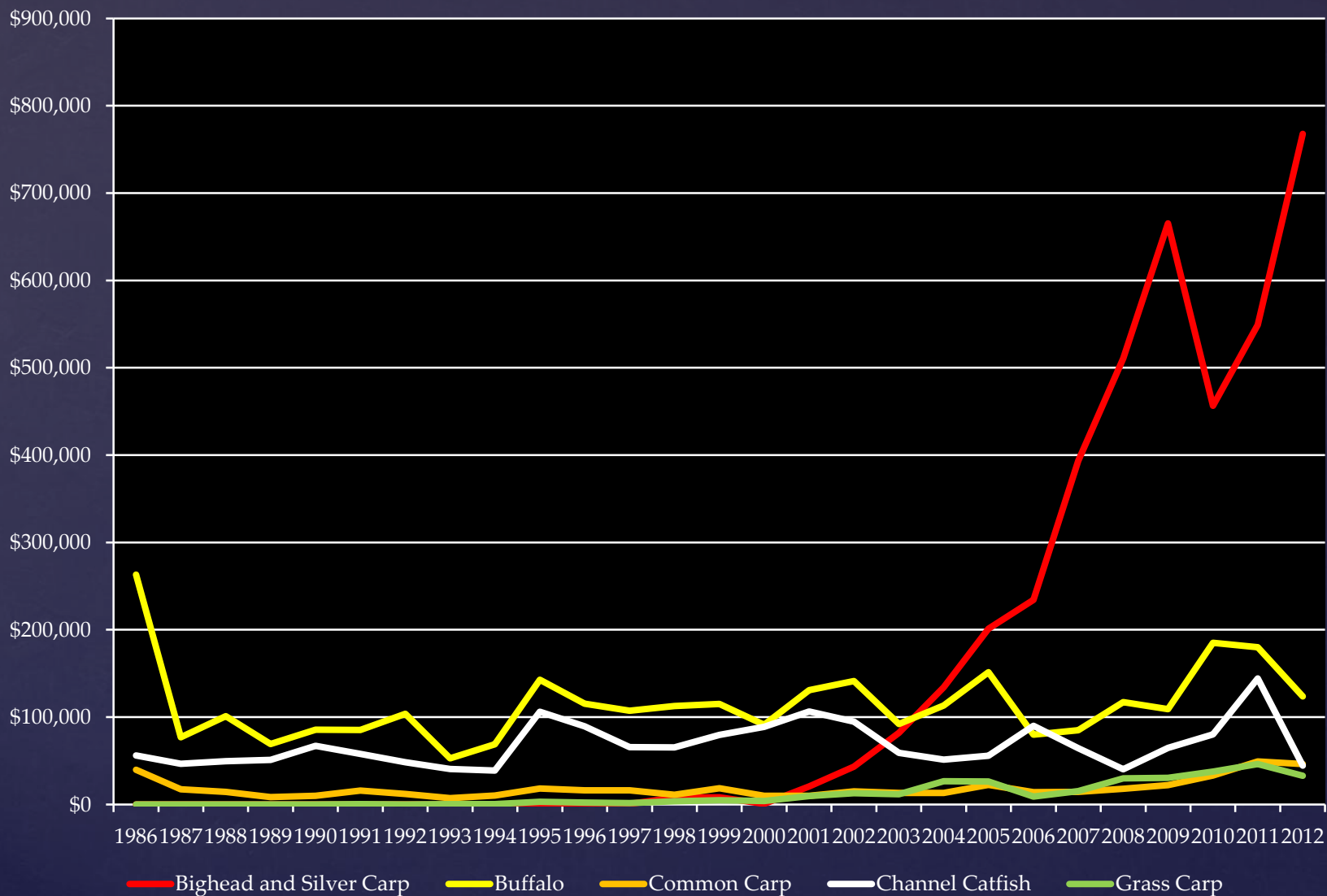
American Eel comprised .001 % of the total commercial catch from 1950 - 2013

Average Wholesale Price Per Pound Received for the Five Most Important Commercially Harvested Fishes on the Illinois River



These 5 species accounted for 96% of the reported harvest from 1986-2013

Trends in the Wholesale Value of the Five Most Important Commercially Harvested Fishes on the Illinois River



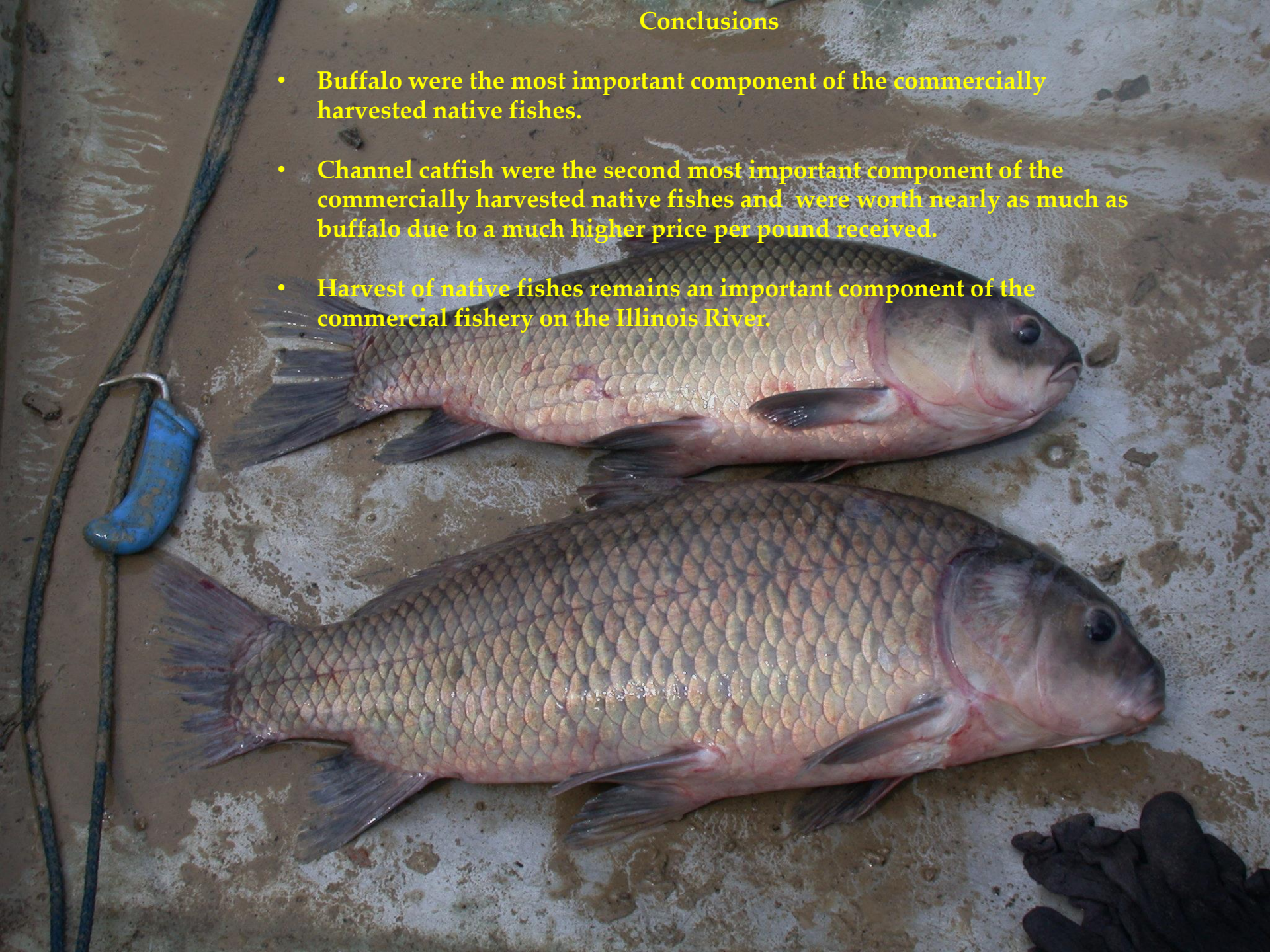
Conclusions

- The number of commercial fishermen working the Illinois River has declined dramatically since 1950.
- Despite this, overall harvest has increased due to improvements in tackle, the use of larger boats and the influx of bighead and silver carp into the Illinois River.



Conclusions

- Buffalo were the most important component of the commercially harvested native fishes.
- Channel catfish were the second most important component of the commercially harvested native fishes and were worth nearly as much as buffalo due to a much higher price per pound received.
- Harvest of native fishes remains an important component of the commercial fishery on the Illinois River.



Conclusions

- Despite a low price per pound received, bighead and silver carp have become the most valuable component of the commercial fishery on the Illinois River due to the large volumes of fish being caught.
- Any increase in price per pound received should lead to an increase in overall harvest of bighead and silver carp.



Acknowledgements

Dr. John Chick – Illinois Natural History Survey, and members of his staff for help with management of the commercial harvest data.

Questions ?