



TEXAS

## Does a fish named after Satan still exist in Texas aquifer? Believers are searching

BY MARK PRICE

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This rare catfish hasn't been seen in 30-plus, but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is hoping to find evidence it still exists in an aquifer below Texas. HENDRICKSON LAB/ICHTHYOLOGY COLLECTION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN PHOTO



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The search for a creature named Satan is underway 1,000 feet below San Antonio and the bizarre details of the effort resemble a horror movie.

Satan is a carnivorous catfish that looks more like a ghost than the devil.

It's milky white, slightly translucent, blind and [reigns as "top carnivore"](#) in a massive aquifer that is among "the most diverse subterranean aquatic ecosystems in the world," the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports.

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Satan, it would appear, has gone missing from the depths of South-Central Texas.

“This rare catfish hasn’t been seen in 30+ years,” [the wildlife service wrote](#) Tuesday in a Facebook post.

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“We are sampling at multiple artesian wells to try and find DNA evidence of its continued existence. Due to its scarcity, restricted habitat and threats to the aquifer, we are also reviewing this species for a possible Endangered Species Act listing.”



A traveling exhibit organized by the American Museum of Natural History called Amazing Species: Life at the Limits makes a stop at its affiliate museum, Museum at Prairiefire in Overland Park. The exhibit describes how creatures have adapted to su BY JILL TOYOSHIBA

The search for proof of Satan — either via DNA or the fish itself — is focused on wells in Bexar County, officials said.

Coincidentally, Satan is not just a nickname. The species’ formal name is “Satan eurystomus,” though it may be better known as the widemouth blindcat, experts say.

Its realm is a part of the Edwards Aquifer known as the “bad water zone ... where fresh water and saline water meet,” the wildlife service says.

“This species was first described in 1938, when one of the strange catfish was drawn up from a well and donated to a museum in San Antonio,” the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported Tuesday.

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“In the years that followed, more of these fish were found when artesian wells pulled them up from the deep. The last known specimens were collected by Texas State University researchers in 1978. ... Unfortunately, the species has never been found again. But it’s not for lack of trying.”

The research project is a partnership among the wildlife service, the University of Texas at Austin and the environmental consulting firm Zara Environmental LLC, officials said.

More than 40 species “of highly adapted, [aquatic, subterranean species](#)” live the aquifer, and seven have been formally listed as endangered, according to the Edwards Aquifer website.

“The main problems for all the species are reduced spring flows caused by increased pumping, elimination of habitat, and degradation of water quality caused by urban expansion,” the site says.

The San Antonio Water System, which relies on the water, reports the “[aquifer and its catchment area](#) ... is about 8,000 square miles and includes all or part of 13 counties in south central Texas.”

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Tuesday



Meet Satan, a predator who rules in total darkness deep below the surface of the earth. Don't worry, the only ones who should fear Satan eurystomus (also known as widemouth blindcat) are the crustaceans living in the Edwards Aquifer 1,000 feet below San Antonio.

Though this rare catfish hasn't been seen in 30+ years, we are sampling at multiple artesian wells to try and find DNA evidence of its continued existence. Due to its scarcity, restricted habitat and threats to the a... See More

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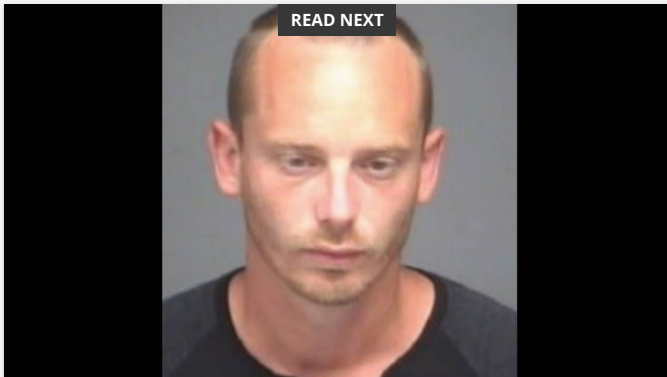
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