

Catfish capitals? Alaska tops the states where your online romance may be a scam

June 14 2019, by Edward Baig, Usa Today



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Summer romance is in the air and the special someone you just met at an online dating site or on social media seems too good to be true. The sad truth is the person just might turn out to be.

In fact, your would-be dreamboat could be a "catfisher." So is anywhere safe? Some states have a higher risk than others, it seems.

HighSpeedInternet.com has issued a new report "When Love Bites," in which the internet service provider comparison website identified the states where you are most likely to fall prey to these scammers.

These digital bottom feeders pose as love interests, typically creating a fake online profile complete with an attractive picture. Really they're just waiting to hook and reel you in to take your money, sometimes even under the guise of wedding planning.

Alaska turns out to be the state where you are most likely to be catfished, according to the HighSpeedInternet.com report, which was based on data from the 2018 FBI Internet Crime Report, and U.S. Census population estimates.

Nevada, Wisconsin, New Mexico and Colorado round out the next most likely states.

Such scams have caught the attention of the Federal Trade Commission and Better Business Bureau.

The BBB has reported that online romance schemes cost victims as much as \$1 billion over a three-year period, which could be a lowball estimate since most people do not file complaints with the BBB or law enforcement because they're too embarrassed after falling for the scam.

You may have better prospects in Illinois, Georgia, South Dakota, Mississippi and Ohio, the states where you are least likely to be a target.

California had 2,105 reported victims in one year, highest in the nation, though it also, of course, has the largest population. Much smaller Vermont with just 25 reported victims had the fewest.

The state with the highest cost per victim is North Carolina, with

\$47,886 per crime.

And according to the FBI, some \$324 million was lost to catfish scams last year.

HighSpeedInternet.com outlined some basic tips to avoid getting catfished.

For starters, keep conversations in an online dating app for as long as possible. Once those exchanges get out on [social media](#) or via text, you're at the risk of revealing more of your [personal information](#) to the potential scammer.

Be mindful for information that could be used in identify theft: There's the obvious stuff to withhold like [bank accounts](#) and such, but also be wary of revealing mom's maiden name or the name of your first pet.

Thought it may go without saying, we'll say it: Never send money to a person you have not met in person, no matter how long you've been "involved" in the relationship online.

And in the end, go with your gut. If the relationship seems fishy, look elsewhere for a summer fling that if all goes well could lead to something more meaningful—and real.

(c)2019 U.S. Today

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Catfish capitals? Alaska tops the states where your online romance may be a scam (2019, June 14) retrieved 12 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-06-catfish-capitals-alaska-tops-states.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.