# **NATIVE FISHES OF THE MURRAY-DARLING BASIN**

There are 46 species of native fish in the Murray-Darling Basin, ranging from tiny gudgeons and pygmy perch to the Murray cod which can reach 1.8 m and 113.5 kg.

Populations of many native fish species in the Basin have declined over the past 50 years, mainly due to habitat loss or modification, barriers to fish movement and the effects of introduced species.



**Freshwater catfish** (Tandanus tandanus) Commonly 30-45 cm. Widespread throughout the Murray-Darling Basin, but generally in the lower, slowflowing rivers.

Bony herring (Nematalosa erebi) Commonly 10-20 cm. Widespread in the majority of Basin's lowland rivers, where they are often the most abundant native species. Largely absent from upland rivers.

**Olive perchlet** (Ambassis agassizii) Commonly 4-6 cm. Formerly widespread in the Murray-Darling Basin, now largely restricted to the northern Basin.





Images:

Australian smelt (Retropinna semoni) Commonly 4-7 cm. Has been recorded in most lowland streams of the Basin, preferring slow-moving or still water in a variety of habitats.

Spangled perch (Leiopotherapon unicolour) Commonly 10-20 cm. Australia's most widespread native freshwater fish. In the Basin it occurs in the north and west, primarly north of Condoblin

Un-specked hardyhead

Macquarie perch (Macquaria australasica)

and Barmah

Threatened. Commonly 25-35 cm. Typically found in the cool, upper reaches of the River Murray system in Vic, NSW and the ACT. Most remaining populations small and isolated.

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Trout cod (Maccullochella macquariensis) Commonly 40-50 cm. Endangered. Once widespread but now reduced to only small breeding populations, the largest of which is in the River Murray between Yarrawonga



(Maccullochella peelii) Endangered. Common Australia's larg und throughout most of the Basin, cept for upper reaches of the southern putaries. Has been introduced into many es and dams.

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Murray-Darling rainbowfish (Melanotaenia fluviatilis) Commonly 5-7 cm. Generally restricted to backwaters, billabongs and slowflowing areas throughout the Basin.

Western carp gudgeon (Hypseleotris klunzingeri) Commonly 3-5 cm. As a group, carp gudgeons are widespread and common at mid-to-lower altitudes in the central and southern Basin.

Silver perch (Bidyanus bidyanus) Threatened. Commonly 30-45 cm. Formerly widespread over much of the Basin excluding the most upper reaches, it has declined over most of its range to occasional populations in the mid-Murray.



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### Golden perch (Macquaria ambigua)

Commonly 25-45 cm. Widespread throughout lowland, slow flowing rivers of the Basin.

Short-finned eel (Anguilla australis) Commonly 70 cm. Primarily a fish of coastal streams outside of the Basin, gh occasionally recorded in

(Craterocephalus stercusmuscarum fulvus) Commonly 5-7 cm. Formerly widespread, but has declined and is now threatened. More common in the northern Basin and patchi found in the middle and lowland sections ivers and some tributaries in the sout



Purple-spotted gudgeon (Mogurnda adspersa) Commonly 4-5 cm. A threatened species mostly found in the uppe

eastern reaches of the Basi

# **INTRODUCED FISHES** OF THE MURRAY-DARLING BASIN

Eleven introduced or alien species of fish have been recorded in the Murray-Darling Basin. The range and impacts of each species on the environment and on native fish varies. Some fish were introduced for recreational angling while others were introduced through the aquarium trade.

Eastern gambusia (Gambusia holbrooki) Females usually 6 cm, males smaller. Widely distributed throughout the Basin, commonly found in farm dams, slowflowing waters and shallow wetlands. A high reproductive rate means it often greatly outnumbers native species.

> Tench (Tinca tinca) Usually 10-30 cm. Primarily restricted to Victoria. Often abundant in off-channel habitats such as backwaters and lagoons and in deep, sheltered holes.

> > only 20 cm. Widespre

Tilapia (Oreochromis mossambicus) Commonly 20 cm. A hardy, adaptable and rapid breeder, Tilapia thrives in even highly disturbed watercourses. With several established breeding populations in southern Queensland, spread into the Basin is a high risk.

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**NEW THREAT** 

Goldfish (Carassius auratus) the Murray-Darling Basin

Redfin perch (Perca fluviatilis) Commonly 40 cm and 1-2 kg. Widely distributed throughout the southern part of the Basin, mainly occurring in slow-flowing or still water habitats such as lakes, billabongs and swamps. Redfin are voracious predators of other fish and invertebrates. They carry a virus that affects many native fish.

Brown trout (Salmo trutta)

Commonly 1-4 kg. Forms the basis of important recreational fisheries in south-eastern Australia and is widely distributed in the cool upland streams and lakes of the Murray-Darling Basin

> Carp (Cyprinus carpio) Commonly 4-5 kg. Wide and lowland rivers and tributed in slo ks as well as uplar streams. Carp often o e between 70-90% id streams. Car of the fish biomass in can tolerate low oxyge s and higher le of pollutants and turk an many nativ fish. Their feeding beh affects wate

Oriental weatherloach (Misgurnus anguillicaudatus) Usually 16-19 cm. Now established throughout the entire Basin. The oriental weatherloach can burrow to escape predators and move overland to disperse, giving it a competitive edge over native species.

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## Atlantic salmon (Salmo salar) Commonly 1-3 kg. Only found in areas where the species has been stocked for recreational fishing.

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#### Roach (Rutilus rutilus) Commonly 15-20 cm. Occasionally recorded in the Victorian waters of the Murray-Darling Basin.

### Rainbow trout (Oncorhynchus mykiss) Commonly 1-4 kg. Popular species for recreational

fishing. Widely distributed in the cooler upland streams of the Basin.

**Brook char** (Salvelinus fontinalis) Commonly 80-85 cm. Not common in the Murray-Darling Basin.

> Images: **Gunther Schmida** Neil Armstrong