



Golden Perch/Yellow Belly *Macquaria ambigua*

DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISTICS

Golden Perch are native to Australia. They are a moderately large fish, oval in shape and laterally compressed. They have a distinctive concave forehead with a protruding lower jaw and truncate caudal fins. They vary in colour from bronze, olive or brownish all over with a yellow underside. Median fins are grey-black, while paired fins are dusky grey to yellowish. Juveniles are silvery with scattered grey mottling on the sides and

dusky grey fins.

Photo by Gunther Schmida. Sourced from the Murray-Darling Basin Commission.



BIOLOGY AND LIFE CYCLE

Golden Perch are a solitary species, most frequently occurring in warm, turbid, sluggish waters, and sometimes associated with backwaters and billabongs. They are able to withstand water temperatures within the broad range of 4 to 37 degrees Celsius and salinities of up to 50,000 EC.

This species can reach a maximum of 75 cm and 23 kg, however it is more commonly less than 5 kg.

Males become mature between 2-3 years of age, while females mature at around 4 years of age. Spawning occurs at night between spring and summer when water temperatures are between 23 and 26 degrees Celsius.

Spawning is thought to be triggered by an increase in daylight and rising water levels. Adult fish will move a considerable distance (up to 2,000 km) upstream to spawn if possible. Although, migration is not essential to spawning. As many as 500,000 eggs may be produced from a single female in a typical spawning. Eggs float near the surface and hatch within 24-36 hours.

Golden Perch are carnivorous, feeding mainly on shrimp, yabbies, insects, molluscs and small fish. Feeding behaviour varies, with some remaining in shaded areas or amongst vegetation to prey on food as it passes and others cruising over weed beds picking out prey.

DISTRIBUTION

This species can be found throughout the Murray-Darling Basin except the headwaters at high elevations. Formerly this species was very common, but numbers

have declined severely in the Murray-Darling system. Golden Perch is widely bred commercially and stocked in substantial numbers in many Australian farm dams.

CONSERVATION STATUS IN VICTORIA

This species is considered rare within much of its original range, although it is still present in large numbers in some locations. Golden Perch have benefited from

stocking in lakes and impoundments. It has recently been listed as part of a threatened fish community in the lower Murray River.

KEY THREATS

The decline in distribution and numbers is due to negative effects on recruitment of juveniles into existing populations. This has occurred as a result of river man-

agement and construction of weirs and dams which have altered natural flow regimes and temperature stratification, and impede migration.