



River Blackfish *Gadopsis marmoratus*

DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISTICS

River Blackfish are native to Australia. They are elongate and have quite a slender body, with jugular pelvic fins, a single long-based dorsal fin, tiny scales and a well developed lateral line. They have a large snout and mouth, and the larger upper jaw protrudes over the lower jaw. Colouring can vary from uniform dark grey/black all over to a paler brown with patchy darker bands, blotches or mottling on sides, extending to basal section of the median fins. The outer section of the median fins are milky to semi-transparent.



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

BIOLOGY AND LIFE CYCLE

This species is a bottom dwelling, nocturnally active fish that is rarely encountered in open water without cover. They prefer plenty of shelter from high velocity waters. Blackfish like clear, gently flowing water, although they are tolerant of slightly brackish conditions, and water temperatures of between 5 and 25 degrees Celsius.

River Blackfish can grow up to 60 cm and 5.5 kg, however they usually only grow to about 30 cm.

Blackfish reach sexual maturity at about 2 to 3 years of age. Spawning occurs in late spring to early summer. The female deposits a single batch of between 20 to

500 orange/red coloured eggs on the bottom surface of a well sheltered hollow log or rock crevice at various depths of the water column. It takes about 16 days for the eggs to hatch, and may take another 3 weeks for the larvae to detach themselves from the egg casing. The male guards the eggs and attached larvae until they have dispersed.

River Blackfish are ambush predators that feed on other fish and aquatic insects.

This fish remains within a stretch of water of about 20-30 m throughout its entire lifespan.

DISTRIBUTION

Common in rivers and streams south of the Great Dividing Range in Victoria and in higher waters in the south eastern Murray-Darling Basin. Remains common

throughout many localities, however its overall abundance has decreased noticeably in the last century.

CONSERVATION STATUS IN VICTORIA

The River Blackfish is considered to be common.

KEY THREATS

Gadopsis marmoratus is very susceptible to siltation due to their preference for upland streams. Agricultural practice throughout the Murray-Darling basin has severely restricted the distribution of this fish. The species is highly susceptible to being stressed by over fish-

ing, due to its home-ranging and low fecundity (production of young). Its abundance may also have declined due to snag removal lowering availability of habitat and spawning sites.