



Silver Perch *Bidyanus bidyanus*

DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISTICS

Silver Perch is endemic (native) to Australia. It is a moderately elongate fish with a small head and eyes. The dorsal fin has hard spines towards the front, becoming soft towards the tail. Its tail fin is slightly forked. Colouring of this fish is variable, dependant on water conditions but commonly appear silvery-grey with darker scale margins. The belly and pelvic fins are usually white, while the median fins are grey. Juveniles are similar, but have dark mottling dorsally.



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

BIOLOGY AND LIFE CYCLE

This species resides in rivers, lakes and reservoirs, preferring areas of rapid flow. Silver Perch school in large numbers, sometimes near the waters' surface. In summer it can often be found congregating below weirs and rapids. They can tolerate a wide range of temperatures, from 2 to 37 degrees Celsius. Silver Perch reach a maximum size of about 40 cm and 8 kg, but are more commonly around 30 cm and less than 1.5 kg. Silver Perch migrate upstream in spring to spawn.

Spawning occurs near sunrise in schools of between 50 and 70 individuals in flooded backwaters of low gradient streams. In years where there are no floods little to no spawning will occur. Females produce up to 300,000 eggs which are semi-buoyant. Males become mature at about three years of age, and females become mature at age five. They feed on shrimp, yabbies and aquatic insects. Larger fish are believed to change to a vegetarian diet.

DISTRIBUTION

Bidyanus bidyanus was once commonly found throughout the warmer waters of the Murray-Darling, however numbers have dropped substantially in recent years. There has not been a re-stocking program for the river populations, due to lack of demand from anglers. This

is not surprising since many anglers targeting Silver Perch fish in impoundments where they are in good supply. This species is bred extensively in the commercial sector and is a popular aquaculture and farm dam species.

CONSERVATION STATUS IN VICTORIA

Silver Perch has been listed as vulnerable by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Australian Society for Fish Biology in the natural riverine environment. It

is protected in its natural riverine environment and cannot be removed. It has been translocated to localities outside of its natural range.

KEY THREATS

Numbers have declined considerably due to man-made barriers such as dams and weirs which inhibit upstream

spawning. This reduces the recruitment of juveniles into existing populations.