



Australian Government



Native Fish Strategy

FISH FACTSHEET: MOUNTAIN GALAXIAS (ORNATE MOUNTAIN GALAXIAS)



Scientific Name

Galaxias olidus GYnther, 1866

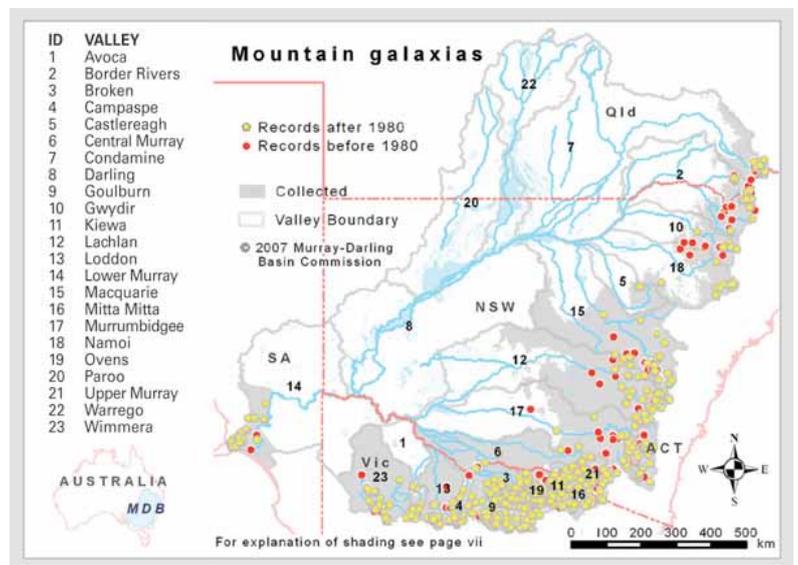
photo by Gunther Schmida

CONSERVATIONS STATUS

Declining.

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE

Mountain galaxias are widely distributed throughout south-eastern Australia, from southern Qld through to SA. They are not restricted to the mountains, being found in lowland habitats as well. However, other galaxiids such as the Common galaxias are more abundant and widespread in lowland rivers in the Basin.



As with other galaxiid species, where trout are present the abundance of Mountain galaxias is greatly reduced in lowland streams and eliminated from many upland streams. In such situations galaxiids are only found above waterfalls or swamps that prevent trout access. An experiment to remove Rainbow trout from a section of Lees Creek in the ACT has resulted in the recolonisation by galaxiids of the trout-free section of stream.

IDENTIFICATION

A small, elongate, tubular fish. Maximum size 140mm; average 70-80mm. The body patterning is variable, with stripes, blotches or no markings present. The back is usually brownish to yellowish-green, and the belly is olive to silvery white. Scales are absent, the tail is truncate to weakly forked, and the anal fin originates at or behind the middle of the dorsal fin.

The Mountain galaxias is quite a variable small fish, with several former species of *Galaxias* subsumed into *Galaxias olidus* in the early 1980s. However, it is likely that some of these species may be reinstated in the near future, and new ones, such as the Riffle galaxias and Obscure galaxias, described.

BIOLOGY AND HABITAT

Mountain galaxias are found in a variety of habitats from small creeks to large rivers. They are often observed in schools in slower flowing or pool habitats, but in situations where trout are abundant they may be restricted to very shallow edge habitats or riffles. They occur at a variety of altitudes within the Murray-Darling Basin, and are the only native fish that is found in the alpine zone above the snowline during winter.

POTENTIAL THREATS

Continued spread of alien species, particularly trout, threatens local galaxiid populations. The effects of the Climbing galaxias-which have been transferred to inland waters via the Snowy Mountains Scheme-on natural galaxiid populations is unknown, but competition or displacement is possible. Infection with the alien parasitic copepod *Lernaea* has been shown to cause significant mortality.

GENERAL REFERENCES

- Berra 1973;
- Bond 2004;
- Cadwallader et al. 1980;
- Green 1979;
- Lintermans 2000, 2002;
- McDowall 2006;
- McDowall & Fulton 1996;
- O'Connor & Koehn 1991;
- Raadik 2001

PDF LINKS

Fishes of the Murray-Darling Basin: An introductory Guide;

<http://mdba.gov.au/files/publications/MDBA-Fish-species-book.pdf>

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