



Australian Government



Native Fish Strategy

FISH FACTSHEET: SMALL-MOUTHED HARDYHEAD



Scientific Name

Atherinosoma microstoma [Günther, 1861]

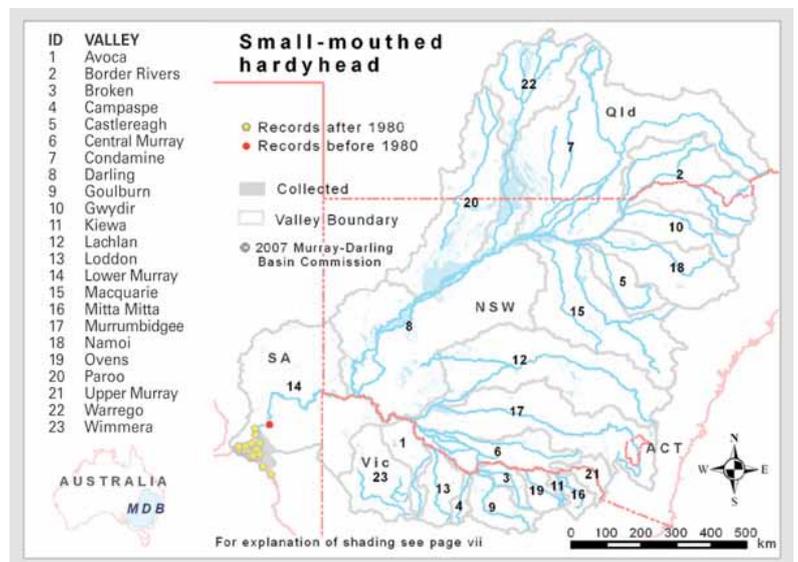
photo by Gunther Schmida

CONSERVATIONS STATUS

Restricted.

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE

The Small-mouthed hardyhead is a common and widespread species in coastal streams of southeast Australia. In the Basin, it is only known from the Lower Lakes of SA and a small distance upstream along the main channel of the Murray and associated wetlands, where it exists as largely landlocked populations.



IDENTIFICATION

A small, semi-transparent, slender fish with a small, barely protrusible mouth, thin lips, large silvery eye and long gill rakers (→ half the diameter of the pupil). Maximum size 107mm; commonly ← 80mm. The two small dorsal fins are short-based, with the second above or slightly behind the origin of the anal fin. The tail is forked, the pectoral fins are positioned high on the body and the anal fin has 7-12 rays. The midlateral scale count is 36-41 and the transverse scale count is 7. Body colour is normally silver but can be green or green-brown above the midlateral stripe, and light green, yellow, white or silvery below. The opercula are bright silver. Males develop intense, bright-orange lateral stripes during the spawning season.

BIOLOGY AND HABITAT

The Small-mouthed hardyhead is a flexible species that normally occurs in estuaries but has a very wide salinity tolerance and is thus capable of living in inland habitats such as lakes and the lower end of freshwater rivers. It is normally found in brackish lakes, lagoons and estuaries in still or slow flowing habitats, and adjacent marine habitats. It is common in estuarine eel-grass habitats. In the Lower Lakes (Alexandrina and Albert) it occurs in edge habitats (e.g. near reeds) or those with aquatic vegetation. It is largely an annual species, breeding in spring and early summer. The diet includes microcrustaceans and insects.

POTENTIAL THREATS

None known.

GENERAL REFERENCES

- Allen et al . 2002;
- Cadwallader & Backhouse 1983;
- Higham et al . 2005;
- Ivantsoff & Crowley 1996;
- Molsher et al . 1994;
- Potter et al . 1986;
- Stuart et al . 2005;
- Wedderburn & Hammer 2003.

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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