



Australian Government



Native Fish Strategy

FISH FACTSHEET: CLIMBING GALAXIAS (BROAD-FINNED GALAXIAS)



Scientific Name

Galaxias brevipinnis GYnter, 1866

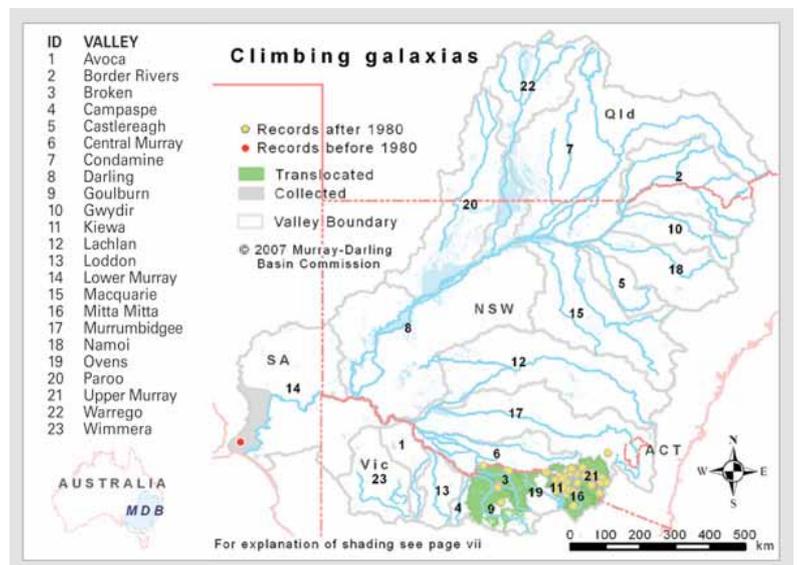
photo by Neil Armstrong

CONSERVATIONS STATUS

Translocated/Native

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE

This widespread species is found in coastal streams of south-eastern Australia and New Zealand. Although it can be predominantly considered as occurring in the Basin as a result of translocation, there is an historical record from the Lower Murray in SA where it probably had a small population in the Mt Lofty Ranges, which adjoins coastal populations (e.g. the species is common on the nearby southern Fleurieu Peninsula). In the Basin, it is largely restricted to the upper Murray and its tributaries such as the Kiewa, Geehi,



Swampy Plains, and Tooma rivers although recent records from the lower Goulburn and Broken rivers indicate it is spreading downstream. A recent record of the species from the Tumut catchment (presumably via the Snowy Mountains Scheme) is the first record for the Murrumbidgee drainage.

IDENTIFICATION

A relatively large galaxiid with a large, dorsoventrally flattened head and a large mouth reaching to below the eyes. Maximum size 278mm; usually 150-180mm. Adults are sturdy and almost tubular, and usually have a blue-black blotch above the base of the pectoral fins. The tail is truncate and the pectoral fins are large, low and downward facing, hence its alternative common name of Broad-finned galaxias. The body is scaleless and greyish brown to olive, often patterned with bold chevron stripes on the dorsal and lateral surfaces, and the belly is a dull silvery olive.

BIOLOGY AND HABITAT

The Climbing galaxias is normally a fish of coastal streams, but it has been transferred to the upper Murray drainage in water from the Snowy River, via the Snowy Mountains Scheme. It is among the several coastal galaxiids that can survive and reproduce as landlocked populations. In coastal streams it breeds during autumn and winter, scattering its eggs amongst vegetation on the stream edge above the normal flow level, presumably when streams are in flood. In these sea run populations the eggs are deposited in flooded riparian areas, usually within 1 m but up to 7 m from the water's edge. Fecundity is high: up to 23,676 eggs have been reported, and an average of 7,000 per individual. The eggs are round, adhesive and 1.8-2.1mm diameter. They develop out of water in these damp habitats for days or weeks and hatch with the next flood. The larvae are thought to be swept downstream to the sea, where they remain for 5-6 months before migrating back into estuarine and freshwater habitats.

The reproductive ecology in the landlocked population of the Basin is unknown, but in similar situations in Tasmania large lakes replace the marine larval stage. There has been little investigation into the species' ecology in the Basin, but in the upper Murray spawning is thought to occur in late April or early May.

The diet consists mainly of aquatic invertebrates such as mayflies, caddisflies dipterans and small crustaceans. The species is renowned for its ability to climb vertical waterfalls and rock faces, using its broad pectoral and pelvic fins.

POTENTIAL THREATS

Where it is a translocated species, the Climbing galaxias may pose a threat to other native fish species, such as galaxiids or blackfish, through competition for food or space. In its natural habitats, it is threatened by predation and displacement by introduced trout species, and habitat loss through deforestation.

GENERAL REFERENCES

- Glova & Sagar 1989;
- Hammer 2004;
- McDowall & Fulton 1996;
- Merrick & Schmida 1984;
- Morison & Anderson 1991;
- O'Connor & Koehn 1998;
- Waters et al. 2002.

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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Murray-Darling Basin Authority

GPO Box 1801 Canberra ACT 2601

Tel 02 6279 0100 Fax 02 6248 8053

www.mdba.gov.au

