



Australian Government



Native Fish Strategy

FISH FACTSHEET: COMMON GALAXIAS (COMMON JOLLYTAIL)



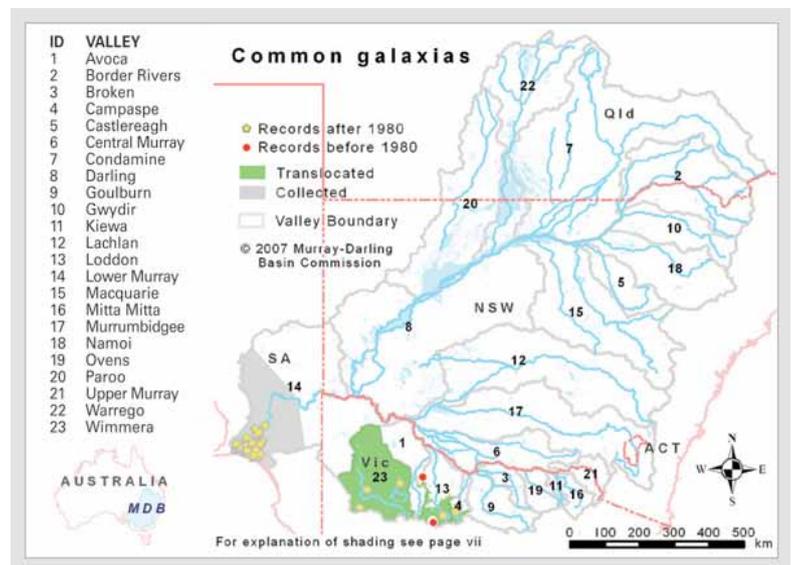
Scientific Name

Galaxias maculatus (Jenyns, 1842)

photo by Gunther Schmida

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE

The Common galaxias is a common fish of lowland coastal streams, from SA to southern Qld and Tas. In the Murray-Darling Basin it is known from the Lower Lakes (Alexandrina and Albert), extending up to approximately Mannum on the Lower Murray and streams of the Mt Lofty Ranges in SA. Its abundance in the lower Basin is likely to have been affected by the barrages below the Lower Lakes, which act as a barrier to prevent the larval whitebait stage returning from the sea. However, the species is still widespread and abundant in the Lower Lakes, where it may be recruiting as a landlocked population without access to marine environments. It is also known from the Wimmera, Loddon and Campaspe catchments in Vic, where it is considered a translocated species, probably introduced through water diversions from coastal streams or in bait-buckets.



IDENTIFICATION

A small, slender fish with a slender caudal peduncle. Maximum size 190mm; usually < 100mm. Scales are absent, the tail is slightly forked, and the anal fin originates directly below the dorsal fin. The head is small and bluntly pointed and the mouth is small, only reaching back to the front of the eyes. The jaws are equal in length. Overall translucent grey-olive to amber in colour, with the back and sides irregularly blotched or spotted greenish grey. The belly, eyes and gill covers are bright silvery to white. The fins are largely translucent.

BIOLOGY AND HABITAT

This species is commonly found in coastal habitats, in still or slow-flowing streams and the margins of lagoons and lakes. Coastal stream populations breed in autumn, with adults migrating downstream to brackish areas to spawn. The larvae disperse to sea for six months before returning to streams the following spring. In landlocked populations in lakes, breeding occurs in late winter-early spring on rising water levels, with adults making a short migration into tributaries to spawn. The larvae are washed down into lakes to spend several months amongst the shallow shoreline vegetation. Individuals are mature at the end of their first year, (~ 90mm length), although some do not breed until their second year. Very few survive until the end of their third year and a substantial proportion of adult fish die after spawning. Each female produces several thousand eggs (up to 13,500). The spawning site is in terrestrial vegetation above the normal water line, either in flooded shallow margins of streams or above the normal tideline in estuaries. The adhesive eggs (~ 1mm diameter) develop in these moist environments over about 14 days and hatching is stimulated by the next high tide or flood. Eggs are able to survive without immersion for up to 8 weeks. Newly hatched larvae are approximately 7mm long.

The species is carnivorous and takes food from the bottom, mid-water or the surface. The diet of landlocked populations consists mainly of amphipods, chironomid larvae and microcrustaceans; stream-dwelling individuals consume more insects.

POTENTIAL THREATS

The barrages on the Lower Lakes may be depressing larval whitebait returns and reduced flows may be reducing spawning opportunities for landlocked recruitment and migration.

GENERAL REFERENCES

- Allen et al. 2002;
- Becker et al. 2005;
- McDowall & Fulton 1996;
- Pollard 1971, 1972, 1973;
- 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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