



Australian Government



Native Fish Strategy

FISH FACTSHEET: DARLING RIVER HARDYHEAD



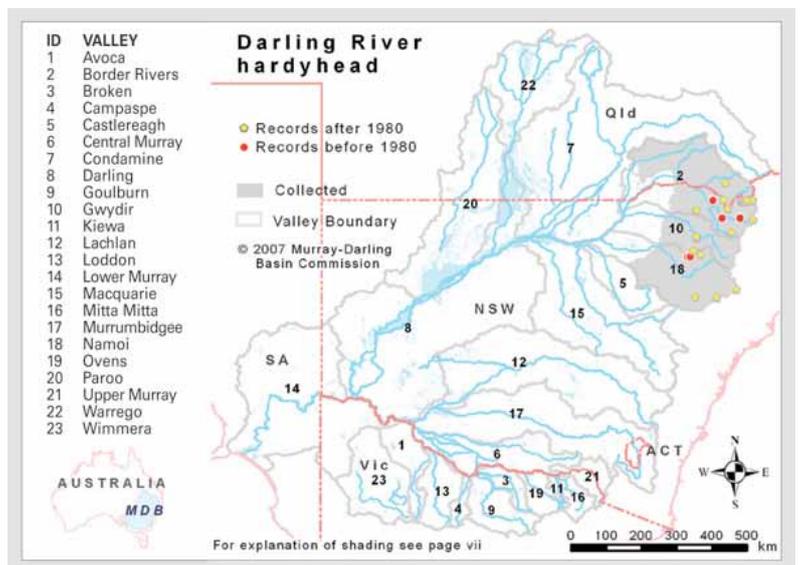
Scientific Name

Craterocephalus amniculus Crowley & Ivantsoff, 1990

photo by Gunther Schmida

IDENTIFICATION

A small, laterally compressed fish with a small protrusible mouth, thin lips, large silvery eye and moderately short, blunt gill rakers. Maximum size 55mm. There are two small, short-based dorsal fins, with the second directly above the anal fin. The tail is forked, the pectoral fins are positioned high on the body and the anal fin has 5-8 rays. The scales are small and rarely overlap; the midlateral scale count is 37-38 and the transverse count 14-18. There are usually no scales on top of head, but if present they are small and circular. The back is dusky gold, the midlateral stripe is dark and silvery with silvery gold below, and the ventral surface is always paler, with a silvery sheen. The opercula are bright silver.



DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE

This hardyhead is found in the northern Murray-Darling Basin in the upper tributaries of the Darling River near the Qld-NSW border. It is also known from the headwaters of the Hunter system in coastal NSW. In the Basin it is patchily distributed, and known from the Condamine, Peel, Namoi, Macintyre and Cockburn rivers and Boiling Down and Warialda Creeks. It is reportedly relatively common in these locations. Recent fish sampling in the upper Dumaresq, Mole and Severn rivers in northern NSW found Un-specked hardyheads in abundance and a concomitant absence of *C. amniculus*, while the reverse was true for the upper Macintyre River. Although abundant at sites where riparian cover is moderate to good in the Macintyre, it is not known whether hardyheads also occur further upstream where the riparian cover is either poor or dominated by willows and other exotic species. The NSW Rivers Survey failed to record any individuals. The Pilot Sustainable Rivers Audit also failed to record any individuals at the 'best available' sites in the northern Basin and at the assessment sites in the Condamine drainage. In the first two sampling rounds of the Audit, a total of 39 individuals were recorded: 1 from the Border Rivers and 38 from 3 sites in the Namoi. In NSW the species has been recorded between about 250-900 m altitude.

BIOLOGY AND HABITAT

The Darling River hardyhead is found in slow-flowing, clear, shallow waters or in aquatic vegetation at the edge of such waters. It has also been recorded from the edges of faster-flowing habitats, such as runs at the head of pools. Almost nothing is known of its life history. Small subadult specimens have been collected in September, but the breeding details are unknown. It can be found singly or in small or large schools (50+ fish). In the Macintyre River, spawning appears to span at least September to February.

POTENTIAL THREATS

The relatively recent recognition of this species means that any declines have not been documented. Water abstraction may be an issue in the smaller creeks that it occupies. Other hardyheads are potentially threatened by habitat degradation, altered flow regimes and impacts of alien species such as Eastern gambusia.

GENERAL REFERENCES

- Crowley & Ivantsoff 1990;
- Ivantsoff & Crowley 1996;
- Morris et al. 2001;
- Harris & Gehrke 1997;
- Gehrke & Harris 2004;
- (P. Unmack unpubl. data)
- (G. Wilson unpubl. data)

PDF LINKS

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

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

First published - January 2009

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