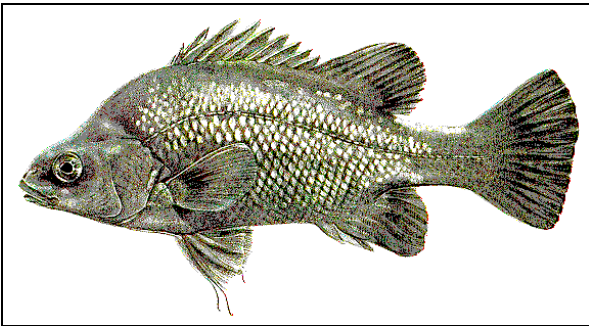


## THREATENED SPECIES AND COMMUNITIES OF THE ACT

### Fact Sheet No. 13    **MACQUARIE PERCH (*Macquaria australasica*)** **An endangered species**

**The Macquarie Perch** (*Macquaria australasica*) is a moderately-sized, deep-bodied, laterally-compressed fish with large white eyes. The predominant body colour is grey to black on the dorsal and lateral surfaces with a whitish ventral surface. Colouration is variable between populations, with some coastal populations being quite mottled. The lateral line is obvious and there are conspicuous open pores on the lower jaw. Adult specimens possess a distinct "humped back" and the tail is rounded. Maximum size is 3.5 kg but is uncommon over one kilogram.



The preferred habitat is cool, shaded, upland streams with deep rocky pools and substantial cover. The species will also survive well in impoundments with suitable feeder streams in which to breed. The species now seems to be confined to the upper reaches of catchments which are more pristine and less impacted by agriculture and sedimentation.

Macquarie Perch reach sexual maturity at 2-3 years of age with fish in reservoirs undertaking a spawning migration into inflowing rivers in late spring/summer. Eggs are deposited above riffles or fast-flowing sections of river, and are then washed downstream where they lodge in gravel or rocky areas until hatching. The diet of Macquarie Perch consists predominantly of small benthic aquatic insect larvae.

In the ACT, *M. australasica* is restricted to four rivers, the Murrumbidgee, Molonglo, Paddys and Cotter rivers. In the Cotter River, the species is restricted to the lower section of the river from its junction with the Murrumbidgee up to Vanity's Crossing (including Cotter Reservoir). The species did occur further upstream on the Cotter but has now disappeared from this area and appears unable to pass the high

concrete causeway built at Vanity's Crossing in the 1970's.

The status of *M. australasica* in Paddys River is unknown as the only records from this stream are pre-1980 angler records.

### **Conservation threats**

The major threats to the continued survival of native fish species in freshwater habitats are habitat alteration, overfishing, and introduced fish species. All three threats are considered to have impacted populations of Macquarie Perch nationally and locally.

Sedimentation of streams can smother spawning sites and reduce food availability. Barriers such as dams, weirs and road crossings fragment populations and prevent fish gaining access to important spawning sites. When populations are small and fragmented, they can easily be further depleted by overfishing.

Introduced fish species can compete with Macquarie Perch for food and living space. Trout are known to prey upon Macquarie Perch. Introduced species can carry diseases and parasites harmful to native fish, with Redfin Perch known to carry a virus which is lethal to Macquarie Perch.

### **Conservation actions**

Invasion of the Cotter River by Carp and Redfin is currently prevented by Cotter Dam.

Environment ACT will highlight the importance of maintaining the integrity of the Cotter Dam barrier to upstream fish colonisation in the event of reconstruction/augmentation of Cotter Dam.

The feasibility of translocating Macquarie Perch past the barrier posed by Vanity's Crossing will be investigated, and the Paddys River catchment surveyed to assess the distribution and status of Macquarie Perch in this catchment.

Environment ACT is providing signage along the Murrumbidgee and Cotter Rivers in the ACT to assist anglers identify threatened fish species.



The primary source of information for this Fact Sheet is the conservation **Action Plan** where a full bibliography is available.

Action Plans are available from the Environment ACT Homepage:

<http://act.gov.au/environ>

Environment ACT Helpline: (02) 6207 9777