



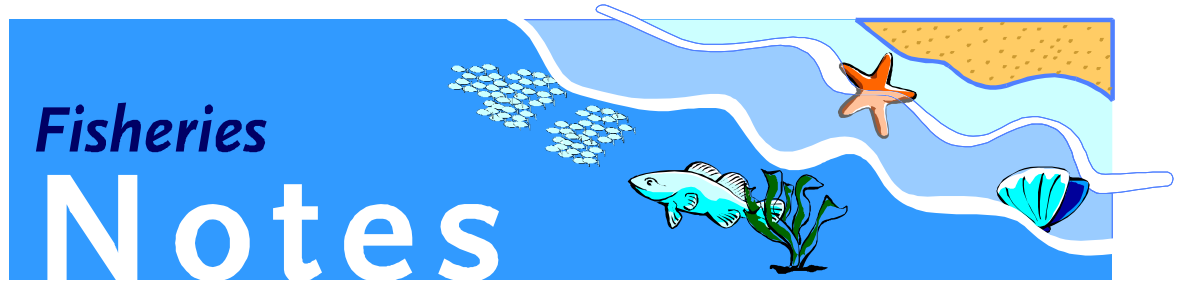
Natural Resources
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Fisheries Notes

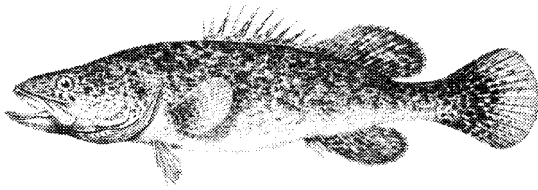
Freshwater Fish of Victoria - Murray Cod

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Common Name: Murray Cod
Other Name/s: Cod
Family: Percichthyidae
Scientific Name: *Maccullochella peelii*
(Mitchell, 1838)
Status: Native, Vulnerable

Murray Cod has been listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act* 1988. Under this legislation, the taking, possession or trading of Murray Cod is prohibited without a permit, license or Governor-in-Council Order issued under the Act.

The taking of Murray Cod from Victorian waters by rod and line in accordance with the provisions of the *Fisheries Act* and *Fishing Regulations* is permitted under the powers of a Governor-in-Council Order.

Departmental research and management activities have been authorised by an Order made under the powers of the Act by the Governor-in-Council.

Description

Broad head with a depressed profile. Rounded snout, with jaws either equal or the lower jaw longer. A large mouth reaching behind the small eye. Rounded tail.

Back colour varies from brown or olive-green to yellow-green with brown to pale green mottling on the upper body, sides and fin bases.

Belly is white and the edges of the dorsal and tail fins may also be white. There is much variation in body shape and colour patterns.

Distribution

Occurs naturally and is widespread throughout the Murray-Darling system, becoming scarcer towards the head-waters. Distribution and abundance have declined in the past 50 years. Has been successfully introduced into a number of waters including the Yarra River. There are few localities in Victoria where Murray Cod can be considered abundant.

Habitat

Occurs most frequently in sluggish, turbid waters, usually in deep holes, where logs and stumps afford cover and provide spawning sites. Will live and breed in lakes if water conditions and habitat are suitable. Occurs naturally in upper reaches of the Murray-Darling system where the water is relatively clear and there is little fallen timber.

Brief Biology

Murray cod can attain 1.8 metres in length and 113.5 kg, and commonly reaches 55-65 cm and weights of 2-5 kg. Usually sexually mature at 4 years of age, growth is rapid in the first 4-5 years, some individual fish reaching 64 cm in the fifth year.

Spawning occurs in the spring and summer months in water temperatures between 16 and 21°C. Females can lay up to 40,000 eggs which are deposited in hollow logs or shallow water. Eggs hatch 6 to 13 days later, with juvenile fish feeding freely about 3-4 weeks later.

Carnivorous, taking a wide variety of food from molluscs and crustaceans to many species of fish, and occasionally water birds such as ducks.

Other Notes

Largest of Australia's native freshwater fishes. A commercial and recreational species, its distribution and abundance have undergone a reduction through construction of dams, changes to river flows and temperatures and increased siltation of streams.

Flesh of smaller specimens has an excellent flavour and it keeps well; larger specimens tend to be coarse and oily.

Now produced in hatcheries which permits enhancement of existing populations or restoration of the species to waters considered suitable for survival and growth of released fish.

The Department stocks a number of waters each year with juvenile Murray Cod produced at its Snobs Creek Hatchery near Eildon or purchased from commercial fish farms. Further information on Murray cod releases is available in **NRENOTES - Fisheries NOTES** detailing native fish stocking programs.

Murray cod was originally believed to be very territorial with a movement range of less than 10 km, which suggested that local effects such as overfishing, pollution or destruction of spawning areas could seriously reduce or eliminate local populations.

Studies in the lower Ovens River tracking Murray cod carrying miniature radio transmitters has revealed a much

greater range during flood/spawning times, with distances up to 90 km before returning to almost the original location.

Regulations

Recreational Fishing Licence requirements, and regulations affecting the taking of Murray cod in Victoria, are provided in the **Victorian Recreational Fishing Regulations Guide**, available free from RFL sales agents and DNRE Offices.

Infosheets - Freshwater Fish of Victoria

is a series of brief information material on the native and introduced freshwater fish of Victoria's inland waters. Further, detailed reading on Murray cod is contained in:

A Guide to the Freshwater Fish of Victoria
Phillip Cadwallader & Gary Backhouse,
Department of Conservation and Environment

Australian Freshwater Fishes
John R. Merrick & Gunther E. Schmida

**Biological Information for Management of Native Freshwater Fish
in Victoria**
J D Koehn, W G O'Connor

Prepared with the assistance of Gary Backhouse, Phillip Cadwallader and Tarmo Raadik.

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