



## Redfin Perch *Perca fluviatilis*

### DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISTICS

*Perca fluviatilis* was introduced to Australia from Europe in the 1860's. Redfin Perch is a moderate-sized, relatively elongate, fish with a pattern of six or more tapering bands on the sides of the body. It has a noticeable black mark at the rear of the first dorsal fin; its pelvic, anal and caudal fins are red in colour. Body colour varies from olive green to grey, fading to green or silver along its flanks and whitish on the underbelly. This species has a humped back behind the head, a large mouth, a slightly forked caudal fin and two dorsal fins (the first with 13-17 strong spines).



Photo By Gunther Schmida. Sourced from the Murray-Darling Basin Commission.

### BIOLOGY AND LIFE CYCLE

*Perca fluviatilis* occur in a wide variety of habitats including lakes, dams, billabongs, swamps, rivers and streams. However they are most commonly found in still to slow flowing freshwater environments or backwaters in rivers and lakes, especially where there is abundant aquatic vegetation. Redfin Perch can grow up to 60 cm in length and 10 kg in weight, but more commonly reach between 40-45 cm and 1-2 kg. Spawning occurs at night in late winter and spring (mid August to late October) when water temperatures reach 12 degrees Celsius, in quite areas away from fast currents. Redfin are usually 2-3 years of age before they reach sexual matur-

ity although some individuals have been found to be reproductively mature at only 1 year of age. Females deposit thousands of eggs (up to 100,000!), in a long gelatinous ribbon, amongst vegetation. The egg mass is protected from predation by other fish, since it is unpalatable. In 7-8 days the eggs hatch and the young form schools before they take up a solitary existence. Redfin are voracious predators, frequently consuming crustaceans, worms, molluscs, insect larvae, frogs and small fish. Juveniles feed mainly on small crustaceans and insect larvae.

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The dietary preferences of Redfin Perch have caused fear amongst conservationists who are of the opinion that this species adversely affects stocks of native fishes such as: Murray Cod, Macquarie Perch, Pygmy Perch and Rainbow Fish. Not only have they been known to prey on many species of small native fish, but also on the young of larger native species. Redfin are capable of rap-

idly populating waterways and tend to over-populate smaller waterbodies, which puts pressure on native species. They compete for food and space with many native species. Recently it became known that Redfin carry a lethal virus, which under certain conditions can be transferred to other introduced fish and our native fish species.

## HISTORY OF INTRODUCTION AND DISPERSAL

Redfin was introduced to Australia by fish acclimatisation societies via Tasmania in 1862 and Victoria in 1868. Since its introduction to Australia, this species has become widespread throughout much of New South Wales, South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria. This

species is now widespread and common in many Victorian lakes and streams. Distribution seems to be limited by an upper water temperature of around 31 degrees Celsius and are rarely found in fast waters or high altitude areas.

## LEGAL STATUS IN VICTORIA

Redfin has not yet been declared a noxious fish species in Victoria. It is a popular angling fish and there is no set minimum size or maximum bag catch limit. The transfer of live Redfin is discour-

aged due to its ability to transfer a lethal virus to other species, both native and introduced.

## POSSIBLE CONTROL MEASURES

Even though Redfin have not been declared as a noxious fish species they do put pressure on native fish species, so their population sizes need

to be monitored frequently. Efforts should be made to prevent the translocation of live Redfin.



Source: Australian Museum web site (<http://www.amonline.net.au/FISHES/fishfacts/fish/pfluviat.htm>)