

Murray cod

Murray cod (*Maccullochella peelii peelii*) is the icon native fish species of the River Murray. It was a key commercial species in the South Australian Inland Waters Fishery and remains an important recreational species. In 2003 Murray cod was listed as a species that was nationally vulnerable to extinction under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). From this listing a National Recovery Plan for this species is currently in its final stages of development.

Biology

Murray cod belongs to the family Percichthyidae and is the largest freshwater fish in Australia. Its natural distribution is wide spread throughout most of the Murray-Darling system except for the upper reaches of some the tributaries in Victoria and southern New South Wales (Lake 1971).

The habitat of Murray cod varies greatly from small clear rocky streams to the generally turbid, slow-flowing rivers and creeks. Murray cod are generally found in or near deep holes and prefer habitats containing cover such as, rocks, fallen trees, stumps, and clay banks or overhanging vegetation (Harris and Rowland 1996).

Murray cod have a relatively short, well-defined breeding season, with spawning occurring in spring and early summer cued by increasing photoperiod and water temperature (Rowland 1983). Murray cod spawn annually (Humphries 2005), but in the lower River Murray relatively strong year classes may only be established when the breeding season coincides with high river flows both within channel and overbank (Rowland 1998).

Age and Size

Murray cod is a long-lived species with a life span that extends to at least 48 years (Anderson et al. 1992). The largest Murray cod reaching 1800 mm length and 113.6 kg, it is commonly 50 – 70 cm and 2.5 kg, with individuals up to 15 kg not uncommon. The relationship between age and size varies between individuals and between lake and river fish (Lintermans, M. and Phillips B. (eds) 2005).

Further Information

Murray cod: http://www.mdbc.gov.au/subs/fish-info/native_info/murrayCod.html

MDBA: http://www.mdbc.gov.au/NFS/summary_of_the_native_fish_strategy

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