

Golden Perch

Macquaria ambigua

Inhabit the Murray-Darling Basin, Fitzroy River catchment, Coopers Creek and Lake Eyre drainages in **Australia**



CONSERVATION
STATUS:

LEAST CONCERN

A female weighing **2.5kg** can produce over

500,000 eggs

Can migrate

2,000 km

upstream to breed



Occupies a small home range of about 100 m and uses **'large woody habitat'** as territory markers

They grow to an average length of

40-50cm



Barriers that stop their migration reduce their ability



to successfully reproduce

and an average weight of:

5kg

M. ambigua

The Golden Perch

Range and habitat

The golden perch, *Macquaria ambigua*, also known as Yellowbelly or Callop, inhabits slow flowing lowland rivers, creeks and billabongs in Australia.

There may be 3 to 5 genetically different populations of golden perch in different areas of their range which includes the Murray–Darling Basin, Fitzroy River catchment, Coopers Creek and Lake Eyre drainages in eastern and central Australia.

Golden perch occupy a small home range of about 100 m outside of their breeding season and use snags ('large woody habitat') as territory markers, feeding areas and as shelter. Home ranges may be held for weeks or months before relocating to another site, where a new home range is established. During breeding, flow and water temperature are important cues for the adults to undertake upstream migration. Golden perch have been recorded migrating 2,000 km upstream to breed.

Spawning occurs at night in flooded backwaters and inundated floodplains after spring and summer rain when water temperatures exceed 20 C. Most movement occurs between October and April over the Australian Spring, Summer and Autumn seasons.

After spawning, fish move back downstream, often back to their home location. The semi-buoyant eggs drift downstream, floating near the surface and hatch in 24 to 36 hours. After about 5 days they start to swim and feed.

After about 1 year the juveniles are about 15 cm long. It takes about 5 years for a fish to grow to 43 cm.

Size

Golden perch have been recorded up to 76 cm in length and 23 kg in weight. However, they are commonly measured between 40–50 cm in length and 5 kg in weight.

Males are able to breed at 2–3 years (20–30 cm) and females at 4 years (40 cm). Females can hold their eggs until spawning conditions are favourable. A female weighing 2.5 kg can produce well over 500,000 eggs.

Feeding

The Golden perch is an opportunistic predatory fish with their adult diet consisting of shrimp, crayfish, molluscs, small fish and aquatic insect larvae. Young golden perch forage on zooplankton – small microscopic animals.

Commercial and recreational fishery

During the mid to late 1800s, commercial fishing for Golden perch started to grow into a large-scale freshwater fishery. In the early 1900s, they constituted 25% of the catch, the remainder comprising of Murray cod (*Maccullochella peelii*). A decline in Murray cod catches in the early 1900s

saw the fishery become more heavily reliant on golden perch. Today the commercial fishery is closed, and although still widespread, golden perch abundance has been greatly reduced. Despite this, they continue to be targeted by recreational fishers as a prized sports-fish. Fish have been translocated into other rivers of New South Wales, Queensland and Northern Territory, and are stocked in impoundments to provide recreational fishing opportunities.

Current threats

Barriers that stop their migration also reduce their ability to successfully reproduce. River regulation, including altered flows, loss of flowing habitat and thermal pollution change spawning cues for native fish, reduce growth rates, and can negatively affect prey species.

Habitat modification and loss through removal of bankside vegetation and submerged woody habitat (fallen trees or snags) is an ongoing threat to Golden perch. Further recovery will continue to depend on improvements in water management, riparian habitat and river connectivity, especially during and following extreme drought conditions.

References

Lintermans, M. 2007, Fishes of the Murray–Darling Basin: An introductory guide.

https://www.fishbase.de/Country/CountrySpeciesSummary.php?c_code=036&id=10312

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<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/fish-species/species-list/golden-perch>

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Scott Nichols
Matthew Gordos

NSW Department of Primary Industries
Fisheries

