

Yarra Pygmy Perch (*Nannoperca obscura*)

Conservation Status

NATIONAL: Vulnerable

(*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*)

South Australia: Critically Endangered

(*National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*)

And **Protected** under the *Fisheries Management Act 2007*.

Victoria: Threatened (*Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*)

Description

The Yarra Pygmy Perch is a dusky pale brownish grey, sometimes greenish fish with a pale belly, spots along the midline, and clear, faint yellow to black fins. It has been known to grow up to 7.5 cm but on average grows to 6.5 cm. Yarra Pygmy Perch usually occur in small groups, often mixed with the Southern Pygmy Perch (*Nannoperca australis*).



Photo courtesy of Kingston Primary School

Distribution

Historically, this species was found in south-western Victoria from the Victoria-South Australia border as far east as the Yarra River, Melbourne and also in the far south-western corner of South Australia. It is now extinct in much of its former range. In the Murray-Darling Basin, the Yarra pygmy perch is found only in Lake Alexandrina. It is also found in coastal streams in western Vic and patchily throughout southeast SA.

Habitat

The Yarra Pygmy Perch prefers slow flowing creeks or still lakes with abundant aquatic vegetation and log snags. It occurs in fresh and brackish waters.

Diet

This species is carnivorous and the diet includes insects, insect larvae and planktonic crustaceans. It is an effective mosquito predator.

Reproduction

Spawning occurs during September and October when water temperatures are between 16-24°C. The eggs are laid in vegetation with juveniles remaining close to cover as they grow. The fins of breeding males develop some black colouration.

Threats

- ★ Habitat alteration such as removal of vegetation and drainage of swamps,
- ★ Habitat destruction such as trampling by cattle and alternation to stream flow
- ★ Predation by introduced species such as salmon and redfin fish

Recovery Plan

The Government has provided funding for education and community engagement in species protection, habitat protection and habitat restoration. FAME has provided funding for Yarra Pygmy Perch captive breeding programs run by both the Kingston Community School and Millicent High School. Kingston Community School initiated the breeding program. After much success this program is being replicated by Millicent High School using fish from the Kingston Community School program. Yarra Pygmy Perch from Kingston Community School's breeding program have also been released into the Valley Lakes Wildlife Park.

References & More Information

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts 2010. *Nannoperca obscura* in *Species Profile and Threats Database*.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/sprat>.

Government of South Australia 2010. Fact Sheet: Yarra Pygmy Perch. www.environment.sa.gov.au/cllmm/pdfs/mf-yarra-pygmy-perch.pdf.