

Family - Cobitidae

A large family native to Europe and Asia, with its greatest diversity in southern Asia and the Malay Archipelago. Australia has no native cobitids, however one species has recently become established in south-eastern Australia.

Oriental weatherloach *Misgurnus anguillicaudatus* (Cantor)



(R.H.Kuiter)

Other names: Japanese weatherloach, Japanese loach, Loach, Mud loach, Weatherfish.

Description: Elongated cylindrical body. Single short-based dorsal fin (5-7); anal fin (5-6) short based and rounded. (9-10) Pectoral fins; pelvic fins (5-8). Rounded tail; five pairs of conspicuous barbels around mouth. Body covered in mucus. Maximum length of about 250 mm but in Australia usually 200 mm or less.

Distribution: The first recording of feral populations in Australia was in the Yarra River, Victoria. A population now occupies a substantial portion of the Ovens River and Murry River downstream to at least Barmah Forest. There are at least three other recorded weatherloach populations in the Melbourne Metropolitan area. There have been recent records from the Latrobe River. A population from the Australian Capital Territory spread into New South Wales waters including the Murrumbidgee River down to lake Burrinjuck. Colonies from the Wingecarribee River have now reached into Lake Burragorang and Coxs River. In late 1992 they were discovered in a small tributary of Lake Eucumbene in the Snowy Mountains in New South Wales. they have also become established in a small suburban creek near Brisbane. There are unconfirmed reports in South Australia and Western Australia.

Natural History: This species is a prized aquarium fish with a native Eurasian distribution. First reports of its establishment in the wild in Australia were in 1984. Weatherloach were probably released into these waterways following the release of unwanted aquarium fish.