

Threatened Fishes Committee Report – December 1999

The eleventh revision of the conservation status classification of Australian fishes.

Convenor, David Crook

Welcome to the last AFSB Threatened Fishes Committee report of the 20th century! Let's hope that the next hundred years is better for the Australian fish fauna than were the last hundred years. Since the last newsletter, there have been a few changes to the committee. At the ASFB Bendigo conference in October, I replaced Peter Jackson as convenor. Peter served the committee as convenor since 1991 and did a great job organising the committee and keeping the threatened fish listings accurate and up to date. I am sure I speak for all ASFB members (and threatened fish) in acknowledging Peter's efforts. As far as State committee members go, Peter Jackson has now replaced Rob Wager as the Queensland rep, whilst all other State members remain unchanged since the last newsletter. An up to date list of the State committee members is presented below.

Nominations and Listings

At the October Threatened Fish Committee meeting in Bendigo, one nomination was received for consideration. Barry Hutchins of the Western Australian Museum of Natural Science nominated Braun's wrasse *Pictilabrus brauni*, a recently described species known only from its type locality in southern Western Australia. As Braun's wrasse was not considered in the recent Threatened Marine and Estuarine Fishes Workshop (see below), Dave Pollard agreed to further examine the status of this species when preparing the Marine Threatened Fishes Action Plan. The ASFB Threatened Species Committee will consider the listings produced for all species included in the action plan, including Braun's wrasse, and will ratify these listings (or parts thereof) at the next committee meeting. Consequently, the threatened fishes list remains unchanged since last published in the December 1998 edition of the newsletter. To make room for other information, nomination forms will no longer be published in the newsletter, but are available from committee members at the addresses listed below. If you think a species should be listed by the committee, please submit a nomination form well in advance of the committee meeting date (ie. the annual conference). This gives members a chance to read through nominations so that any missing or additional information can be requested prior to deliberations.

Threatened Fish News

Threatened Marine and Estuarine Fishes Workshop

A workshop was held in Bendigo prior to the October 1999 ASFB conference to discuss the conservation status of threatened Australian marine and estuarine fishes. Funded by the Biodiversity Group of Environment Australia and chaired by Dave Pollard (NSW Fisheries) and John Paxton and John Pogonoski (Australian Museum), the one day workshop was attended by 40 experts from Australia (35), New Zealand (3) and the United States (2). About 100 species were discussed at the workshop and, in the vast majority of cases, consensus on conservation status was reached. However, some fish, particularly sharks, rays, sawfishes, handfishes and seahorses will require further discussion before a final decision on their conservation status is made. The outcomes of the workshop will be published in a Conservation Overview and Action Plan for Threatened Australian Marine and Estuarine Fishes early in 2000.

New populations of galaxiids discovered

An exciting time in Tassie lately – at least for those, like me, who think galaxiids are exciting. Jean Jackson and her colleagues at the Inland Fisheries Commission have been discovering new populations of critically endangered fish like there's no tomorrow. In the two years since the recovery plan for threatened Tasmanian galaxiids was implemented, surveys have discovered three new populations of Clarence galaxias in the southern Central Highlands and one new population of Swan galaxias near the east coast. Along with the recently confirmed survival and reproduction of the translocated Pedder galaxias population in the Western Arthur Ranges, prospects for the long term survival of Tassie's endemic galaxiids are starting to look a little more optimistic.

Endangering Trout Cod Habitat

Not such good news for the critically endangered trout cod. A recent article in "The Age" newspaper (30 October 1999) described the destruction of habitat in one of the last two areas containing viable trout cod populations. Trees were flattened and rock fords were built across Seven Creeks near Euroa in central Victoria. The landowner blamed the power company, the power company blamed the landowner. I don't know who's to blame, but it certainly isn't the trout cod. Let's hope it gets fixed as the landowner has apparently promised.

Decision Tool for Threatened Freshwater Fish

The management of threatened fish is a tricky business. Even when threatened fish can be bred in large numbers in aquaculture, getting them to succeed out in the real world is fraught with difficulties. Charles Todd and colleagues at the Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment are hoping to address some of these problems by developing a PC based "Fish Modelling Tool". The aim of this model is to provide managers with a generic tool to assist in the construction of population models and to identify critical population parameters for Murray-Darling Basin species. Initially, the model will concentrate on five key species: freshwater catfish,

Murray cod, trout cod, golden perch and silver perch. Using the recently developed model for trout cod as a basic structure, the Fish Modelling Tool will draw biological information from a wide range of sources including government agencies, universities, angling organisations and community groups. Anyone with information to assist Charles should contact him on (03) 94508724 or via e-mail at: charles.todd@nre.vic.gov.au .

Threatened Fish Profiles

Another way of sharing information about threatened fish is by preparing a Threatened Fish Profile for the ASFB newsletter. In each Threatened Fishes Committee Report, one-page profiles will be prepared to provide up to date information about threatened Australian marine and freshwater fish. In this edition, Dave Pollard and Jean Jackson have prepared profiles on the grey nurse shark and the Pedder galaxias respectively. These profiles follow a similar format to the "Threatened Fishes of the World" series published in Environmental Biology of Fishes. The newsletter profiles provide a venue for updates on the progress of species with profiles already published in EBF and, hopefully, will encourage people to get to work on new profiles for EBF and the newsletter. If you are interested in preparing a profile on your favourite species, drop me a line.

Thanks to John Pogonoski, Jean Jackson and Charles Todd for information used in this section. If you have any contributions for the next Threatened Fish News, please contact David Crook at the address below. I see this column as a good way of sharing information about threatened fish in Australia and would appreciate your input.

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