

# Threatened Fishes Committee Report - June 2000

By David Crook

There has been a lot happening in the world of threatened fish over the past six months. Thanks to all who provided information used in this column. The next ASFB Threatened Fish Committee meeting will be held on the morning of the rest day at the annual conference to be held in Albury on 8-13 August 2000. Issues on the agenda will include nominations for listing, the preparation of a “terms of reference” statement for the committee, discussion of the utility of the ASFB and IUCN criteria, and consideration of alternative criteria. All ASFB members are welcome to attend the meeting, and if there are particular issues people want to raise, please contact me and I’ll add them to the agenda. Also on the rest day morning, Dave Pollard of NSW Fisheries (contact details below) will be holding an informal meeting/workshop to discuss the conservation status of threatened NSW freshwater fish. The meeting will be similar to last year’s Threatened Marine Fishes Workshop, although on a much smaller scale and time frame, and will examine 20-30 freshwater species in NSW waters. So forget going up to the ski fields on your lay day and come talk threatened fish with us!

See you in Albury!

## ***Nominations and Listings***

With the Albury conference just around the corner, anyone wishing to submit a nomination for species listing should get it in ASAP. A couple of nominations have already been received and the committee members need to have a reasonable amount of time to properly consider nominations. To receive an electronic version of the current nomination form, please e-mail me at the address below.

## **Threatened Fish News**

### **Silver Perch Recommended “Vulnerable” in NSW**

In response to a nomination by the Inland Rivers Network (IRN), the NSW Fisheries Scientific Committee has recommended that Silver Perch (*Bidyanus bidyanus*) be listed on Schedule 5 of the NSW Fisheries Management Act as a “Vulnerable” species. The ASFB Threatened Fishes Committee provided a letter of support to the Fisheries Scientific Committee regarding the Silver Perch nomination. The IRN are currently seeking information on the freshwater catfish (*Tandanus tandanus*) with a view to preparing a nomination for this species, if it is warranted.

Anyone with relevant information on catfish should contact Stuart Blanch via e-mail at: [sblanch@irnsw.org.au](mailto:sblanch@irnsw.org.au).

## ***Review of Lower Murray Fish Conservation Status***

Adelaide University Honours student Scotte Wedderburn recently completed a review of the conservation status of small native fish species in the lower River Murray in South Australia. In the review, purple-spotted gudgeon *Mogurnda adspersa* and possibly the Chanda perch *Ambassis agassizii* were considered regionally extinct (i.e. from the Murray drainage of South Australia), and the river blackfish *Gadopsis marmoratus* and pygmy perch *Nannoperca australis* were considered regionally endangered.

### **Mine Proposal for Gammon Range National Park: Threat to Vulnerable Gudgeon?**

A proposal has been submitted to the South Australian government to establish two open cut magnesite mines near Weetootla Gorge in the Gammon Ranges National Park. A creek near the proposed mining site contains the most important known population of the Flinders Ranges gudgeon (*Mogurnda clivicola*), which is listed as "Vulnerable" by ASFB - see Allen and Jenkins (1999) below for further information about this species. Considerable concern has been raised regarding the effect of the mine upon the population of this threatened fish and a mailing list has been established for people concerned about the development. E-mail Bill Doyle ([greenh@picknowl.com.au](mailto:greenh@picknowl.com.au)) for details.

### **TSN Community Grants Program**

The Threatened Species Network (TSN) Community Grants Program is a scheme that aims to support and inspire community work to recover threatened species and ecological communities through the provision of seed funding to community groups. Funded through the NHT and administered by WWF Australia, the TSN is currently calling for applications for suitable projects. If anyone knows of community groups working on threatened fish conservation that may be eligible for funding, application forms and further information are available from Wendy Godden ([wgodden@wwf.org.au](mailto:wgodden@wwf.org.au)) or at the TSN website (<http://www.nccnsw.org.au/member/tsn>).

### **Mary River Cod Stocking Success**

The Lake McDonald Hatchery at Cooroy in south-eastern Queensland was successful again this year in producing about 40,000 Mary River cod fingerlings which were released into the Mary River and tributaries. This is the second year of stocking and the program will continue for a further three years to establish age classes within the stocked populations. The Mary River cod recovery plan has recently been updated and forwarded to Environment Australia for formal adoption under Commonwealth legislation.

### **Listing for Endemic Tasmanian Fishes**

With the recent acceptance of nominations of species for listing, all of Tasmania's endemic freshwater fish are now listed under the Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act. The 10 threatened endemic species are all galaxiids with very restricted distributions. The Inland Fisheries Service (formerly Inland Fisheries Commission) is currently investigating ways of improving research and management approaches for these unique species. Other fish species on the Tasmanian Act include the dwarf galaxiid (*Galaxiella pusilla*), the Australian grayling (*Prototroctes maraena*), and the spotted handfish (*Brachionichthys hirsutus*).

### Recent Taxonomic Changes and Additions

Peter Unmack has provided the following information regarding the latest taxonomic changes for Australian freshwater fish:

Allen, G.R. & Feinberg, M.N. (1998). Descriptions of a new genus and four new species of freshwater catfishes (Plotosidae) from Australia. *Aqua, Journal of Ichthyology and Aquatic Biology*. **3**, 9-18.

Most of the species described have been recognised as different for many years, but just lacked formal names. *Neosilurus gloveri* (Dalhousie catfish) is confined to 14 springs within the Dalhousie Springs complex in Central Australia (presently listed as "Potentially Threatened"). *Neosilurides cooperensis* (Cooper Creek catfish), a new genus and species is restricted to Cooper Creek in the Lake Eyre Basin. The false-spined catfish was split into two species, *Neosilurus mollespiculum* (Burdekin River false-spined catfish) which is restricted to the Burdekin River, while *Neosilurus pseudospinosus* (north-western false-spined catfish) ranges from the Finnis River (west of Darwin) to the Fitzroy River in the western Kimberleys. Another false-spined catfish occurs (red?) in the Bulloo River based on two specimens collected in 1974. Dr. Allen was unable to determine their specific status due to the small sample size (pers. comm.). This paper clears up the major problems within Australian plotosids, although taxonomic problems remain with widespread species such as *Tandanus tandanus* (eel-tailed catfish), and *Neosilurus hyrtlii* (Hyrtl's catfish), while the distributions and diagnostic characters for *Porochilus argenteus* (silver tandan) and *P. rendahli* (Rendahl's catfish) require clarification.

Allen, G.R. & Pusey, B.J. (1999). *Hephaestus tulliensis* De Vis, a valid species of grunter (Pisces: Terapontidae) from fresh waters of north-eastern Queensland, Australia. *Aqua, Journal of Ichthyology and Aquatic Biology*. **3**, 157-162.

During survey work in northeastern Queensland Brad Pusey *et al.* noticed they had two "forms" of *Hephaestus fuliginosus* (sooty grunter). While originally unsure of its specific status, a search of synonyms for this species turned up an old description by De Vis in 1884 that proved valid. *Hephaestus tulliensis* (khaki bream) can be distinguished from *H. fuliginosus* by having a deeper body, larger eye, smaller mouth, and longer spine and fin rays just to mention a few characters. It occurs from the Tully River north to the Daintree River.

Allen, G.R. & Jenkins, A.P. (1999). A review of the Australian freshwater gudgeons, genus *Mogurnda* (Eleotridae) with descriptions of three new species. *Aqua, Journal of Ichthyology and Aquatic Biology*, **3**, 141-156.

For many years it has been recognised that more than two *Mogurnda* species occurred in Australia. This paper is an attempt to clear up some of the confusion within this group. *Mogurnda oligolepis* (false-spotted mogurnda) (presently listed as "Restricted") occurs from the Berkeley River (west of the Ord River) west to the Fitzroy River within the Kimberleys. *Mogurnda clivicola* (Flinder's Ranges mogurnda) (presently listed as "Vulnerable") is another species recognised as being different for many years. It is primarily restricted to one creek in the Flinder's Ranges. A single specimen from Bulloo River (Queensland) was tentatively referred to this species, and specimens from upper Barcoo River (Queensland) also appear conspecific. *Mogurnda larapintae* (Finke mogurnda) was re-elevated from synonymy having been originally described by Zeitz in 1896. It is primarily restricted to the upper Finke drainage within the Macdonnell Ranges. Lastly, *M. thermophila* (Dalhousie mogurnda) is restricted to Dalhousie Springs where it is typically common in most spring outflows. As with most groups, problems still exist regarding the taxonomy of some populations of *M. mogurnda* and *M. adspersa* with it being likely that many more species actually exist within these latter two recognised species.

