



Freshwater Fish of Victoria: Cichlids

Duncan Hill, (Melbourne)

Updated: March 2008

FN0077

ISSN 1440-2254

Family:

Cichlidae

General Characteristics:

A deep body. Extendable mouth. Single nostril on each side of the head. Long dorsal fin. Lateral line is usually in two parts, the upper running from the gill cover to below the dorsal fin, the lower continuing to the tail fin.



Common Name:

Convict Cichlid (Illustrated)

Other Name:

Zebra cichlid

Scientific Name:

Heros nigrofasciatum (Gunther, 1869)

Status:

Introduced, Noxious

Description

Dark grey to bluish back becoming lighter on the sides to grey with a violet sheen. Belly is pale grey. Eight to nine dark bands run vertically from the back down the sides. Black blotch on the upper part of the gill cover. Fins are generally green with a metallic sheen. Dorsal and anal fins have red borders.

Distribution

Principal self-supporting population is in the Hazelwood Cooling Pondage and associated waters.

Habitat

Found in still and flowing waters, in rocky areas, beneath overhanging banks and over mud where there is no cover. It is unlikely that the species will be able to withstand the cooler temperatures of most Victorian waters.

Brief Biology

Known to reach 15 cm in Victoria. Herbivore, feeding on algae and other plant material. Males and females are extremely territorial and aggressive. Females lay between 150 and 400 eggs which hatch after about 3-4 days. General biology is not well known. Can withstand a variety of water conditions but does best at 24 to 28°C.

Other Notes

Native to central America.

Common Name:

Black Mangrove Cichlid (Not illustrated)

Other Names:

Niger cichlid, spotted tilapia

Scientific Name:

Tilapia mariae Boulenger, 1899

Status:

Introduced, Noxious

Description

Olive to yellowish-green on the upper body, becoming lighter on the sides and a whitish belly. A very dark blotch on the dorsal fin, another dark blotch on the upper gill cover. Eye is deep red.

Distribution

Principal self-supporting population is in the Hazelwood Cooling Pondage and associated waters.

Habitat

Found in still and flowing waters, in rocky areas, beneath overhanging banks and over mud where there is no cover.



It is unlikely that the species will be able to withstand the cooler temperatures of most Victorian waters.

Brief Biology

Reaches 30 cm in length in Victoria. Eggs are laid on rocks, submerged logs or aquatic plants, with both parents guarding and fanning the eggs which hatch after about 3 days. Primarily herbivorous, it will take small invertebrates. Withstands a variety of water conditions, but does best at 22 to 27°C.

Other Notes

Native to west Africa. It will attack smaller fish. Consumes plants and uproots them during the breeding period. Natural populations in Victoria are the result of the illegal release of unwanted aquarium fish.

Regulations

Both cichlids have been introduced to Victorian waters by release of unwanted aquarium fish. Both are declared

"noxious fish" in Victoria, which makes it an offence to release the species into Victorian waters.

Further Reading

Freshwater Fish of Victoria is a series of brief information material on the native and introduced freshwater fish of Victoria's inland waters. Further, detailed reading on Cichlids is contained in:

- *A Guide to the Freshwater Fish of Victoria*
Phillip Cadwallader & Gary Backhouse,
Department of Conservation and Environment
- *Australian Freshwater Fishes*
John R. Merrick & Gunther E. Schmida

Acknowledgements

This Information Note was originally developed by Charles Barnham PSM, with the assistance of Gary Backhouse, Phillip Cadwallader and Tarmo Raadik. The previous version was published in March 2007.

The advice provided in this publication is intended as a source of information only. Always read the label before using any of the products mentioned. The State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.