



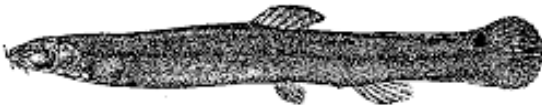
# Freshwater Fish of Victoria: Weather Loach

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*Duncan Hill (Melbourne)*



## Common Name

Weather Loach

## Other Names

Nil

## Family

Cobitidae

## Scientific Name

*Misgurnus anguillicaudatus* (Cantor, 1842)

## Status

Introduced

## Description

Very elongate, tubular body, with conspicuous small scales. Single dorsal fin and large eel-like tail. Small eye in small head. Mouth is on the underside of the head, with the snout projecting beyond the lower jaw, with five pairs of barbels. Small black blotch on the upper end of the body, at the junction with the tail fin. Body with brownish black spots, belly creamy to yellow.

## Distribution

Native to eastern U.S.S.R., Korea, Mongolia, China, Japan, Taiwan and northern Vietnam. In Australia, individuals have been collected from Queensland, New South Wales, and the A.C.T. In Victoria, this species was first recorded in 1984 from the Yarra River where it has since spread throughout the majority of the system. Further populations have been recorded from Dandenong Creek, Skeleton Creek, and from the Ovens River near Wangaratta.

## Habitat

In Victoria, Weather Loach have been found in both streams and lakes, either buried in the substrate, moving over the substrate, or amongst dense submerged aquatic

vegetation. Substrate consists of sand, silt and mud, as well as areas of rock-rubble.

## Brief Biology

Can grow to 23 cm in length, becoming sexually mature at about 8 cm in length. Can tolerate water temperatures from 2-32°C. Females are highly fecund, laying up to 150,000 small demersal eggs. Weather Loach have the ability to spawn up to three times in a breeding season (spring to summer). Hatching takes 2-3 days and larvae are free-swimming after a fortnight. Bottom feeding fish, using the barbels around the mouth to feel and taste food.

## Other Notes

This species has established self-sustaining populations in Hawaii, continental U.S.A. and Mexico via accidental releases from the ornamental aquarium trade, and has been stocked in the Philippines. Large individuals are edible, and loach are intensively cultivated in Taiwan for the domestic market. Mature males can be distinguished from mature females (over 8 cm in length) by a thickening of the outer edge of the pectoral fins. Weather Loach are able to gulp air from the surface, and survive out of water for long periods of time, and in wet weather can cross land from one water to another.

## 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.

## Acknowledgements

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