



Freshwater Fish of Victoria: Roach

Duncan Hill, (Melbourne)

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Common Name:

Roach

Family:

Cyprinidae

Scientific Name:

Rutilus rutilus (Linnaeus, 1758)

Status:

Introduced

Description

A deep body with a small mouth and head and a blunt snout. Gape of mouth does reach beyond the eye. No teeth on jaws. Moderate sized, firmly attached scales. Tail is strongly forked with rather pointed tips. Often silvery overall, but can be olive-green or dull bluish on the upper body, intensely silvery sides, white belly. Eyes are usually bright red. Dorsal (top) and tail fins usually greyish-brown, other fins orange or orange-red. No adipose fin.

Status

Originally found most abundantly in the Yarra River system, but now more widespread westward, and also north of the Great Dividing Range in the Goulburn River system. Distribution is patchy, but can be locally abundant.

Habitat

Usually found in still and slower-flowing waters and lakes, particularly where there are aquatic plants. Can tolerate brackish water.

Brief Biology

Known to reach 45 cm in length and 2 kg in weight, but is commonly smaller. Able to withstand a wide temperature range (8-38°C). Omnivorous, often feeding in schools and

mostly a bottom feeder, but in Australia will take terrestrial insects at the surface in warm weather. Females usually mature at 2-3 years of age, males at 1-2 years. Spawning occurs during October-November in shallows amongst vegetation or over a stony bottom. Females can produce up to 200,000 eggs which are small and hatch about 4-10 days later. Larval fish attach themselves to aquatic vegetation for a few days before swimming freely. Individual fish are known to have reached 12 years of age.

Other Notes

Native to Europe. Introduced to Australia by fish acclimatisation societies during the 1860's-1880's. Not commonly fished for by anglers, roach is largely a nuisance fish in terms of competing for space and food with other more desirable introduced and native angling species. Spread of the species has probably been assisted by their use as live bait by anglers. Flesh is firm and white but of poor edible quality, although it is popular in eastern Europe as food. Not a well known fish, although its popularity is increasing with the introduction of "coarse" fishing techniques to Victoria in recent years.

Regulations

Recreational Fishing Licence requirements and regulations affecting the taking of roach are provided in the *Victorian Recreational Fishing Guide* available free from RFL sales agents and DPI Offices.

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 roach 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
- *Salmon at the Antipodes*
John Clement



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