



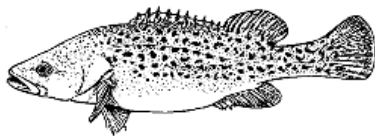
# Freshwater Fish of Victoria: Trout Cod

Duncan Hill, (Melbourne)

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## Common Name:

Trout cod

## Other Name:

Bluenose cod

## Family:

*Percichthyidae*

## Scientific Name:

*Maccullochella macquariensis* (Cuvier, 1829)

## Status:

Native, Endangered

Trout cod is the only Victoria fish listed as an "endangered" species. This means that the species has suffered a population decline over all or most of its former known range of distribution, and is in danger of extinction in the near future.

Trout cod has been listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988. Under this legislation, the taking, possession or trading of trout cod is prohibited without a permit, license or Governor-in-Council Order issued under the Act.

Departmental research and management activities have been authorised by an Order made under the powers of the Act by the Governor-in-Council.

## Description

Broad depressed head with a rounded snout and a straight forehead profile. Larger upper jaw, overhanging lower jaw. Larger eyes than Murray cod. Body colouring can be dark to light brown but generally bluey-grey, with small dark grey to black spots or dashes on the upper body extending on to the lower sides and on the bases of the dorsal, caudal and anal fins.

Fins mainly grey to dark grey, often edged with white. Markings are fewer (if any) on the head, and a dark

horizontal stripe usually extends from the nose through the nostril and eye onto the gill cover.

Lateral line follows the upper body profile and extends to the tail. Known to have reached 800 mm in length and 16 kg in weight, more commonly 400-500 mm and 1.5-3 kg. Largest fish recorded in Victoria was 685 mm and 11 kg.

## Distribution

In Victoria, believed to have been once fairly wide spread in north-central and north-eastern streams flowing into the Murray River. The only known self-sustaining population of trout cod in Victoria is confined to the Seven Creeks system near Euroa.

Distribution is currently being extended as suitable waters are identified and fish produced at Snobs Creek Hatchery for stocking these waters in a program aimed at establishing new viable populations (see "Management").

## Habitat

Cooler upper reaches of streams, usually in flowing pools between falls and rapids where the stream bottom is bed-rock, boulders and sand or gravel substrates. Larger fish are usually found in the deeper holes, smaller fish beneath and amongst boulders.

## Brief Biology

Trout cod spawn during spring-early summer when water temperatures are about 17-18°C, and are thought to breed at a smaller size than Murray cod. Eggs are adhesive and laid on or near the stream bottom.

Diet includes aquatic insects and crustaceans such as yabbies, crayfish and shrimps. They may also leap from the water to take food items just above the surface.

## Management

The Department has been conducting research on trout cod for some years, and is now successfully breeding the species at Snobs Creek Hatchery.

Since 1988 juvenile trout cod have been released into a number of streams which have been identified as potentially suitable habitat for stocking the species in an attempt to establish additional trout cod populations.



Information on stocking programs is available in Fisheries Notes listing native fish releases.

### Other Notes

Closely related to the Murray cod. Although first described in 1829, it was not until 1972 that it was recognised scientifically as a distinct species from Murray cod.

Apart from environmental changes such as those caused by dams, siltation and "river improvement" activities, it is likely, because of similarities in habitat requirements, certain aspects of observed behaviour (such as establishment of territories), and feeding habits, that introduced trout may have been a factor in the decline in range and abundance of trout cod.

Trout cod flesh is edible, but is said that it does not keep as well as the flesh of Murray cod.

Trout cod settle down well in aquaria and take a variety of natural and artificial foods.

### Regulations

The taking of trout cod from Victorian waters is prohibited, and the possession of trout cod is permitted only by a permit issued by the Department.

Victoria's principal viable population of trout cod in Seven Creeks is protected by a total closure to fishing of the section of stream between Polly McQuinns Weir near

Strathbogie downstream to the Galls Gap road bridge below Gooram Falls.

### 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 trout cod 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
- *Biological Information for Management of Native Freshwater Fish in Victoria*  
J D Koehn, W G O'Connor

### Acknowledgements

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**Note:** The line illustration of trout cod is used with the permission of NSW State Fisheries

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