

Tasmanian whitebait

Lovettia sealii



Occurs in coastal streams around the state.

Description: A small fish with their dorsal fin positioned approximately mid-length along their back, just behind the origin of the pelvic fins. They don't have scales. They have an adipose fin, this distinguishes them from juvenile galaxias.

Colour: The adults when first entering estuaries from the sea, have a transparent body with their gonads and swim bladder visible. After spawning they are almost black, with no distinct pattern.

Size: Commonly to 60 mm, but up to 77 mm.

Habitat: Lives at sea until they form large schools migrating to the freshwater reaches of coastal rivers to spawn.

Diet: Unstudied, most feeding takes place at sea.

Life Cycle: Adult fish migrate from the sea to the upper reaches of estuaries during late Winter and early Spring to spawn. After spawning they die. Eggs are attached to submerged logs, branches and rocks etc, and hatch after two to three weeks. Larvae are swept downstream to the sea, where they live till they return as adults to spawn. Only lives for one year.

Distribution status: Native.

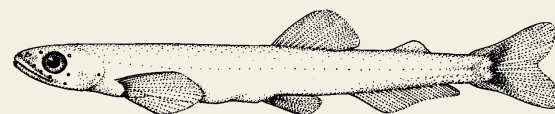
Original range: Found around Tasmania and some parts of coastal Victoria. Not present at King or Flinders islands.

Reasons for change to distribution: In-stream barriers preventing migration runs has reduced their range in freshwater. A historic commercial fishery decimated the species in the 1900s. Illegal fishing and pollution are threatening factors.

Legal status:

Can it be taken? A Whitebait licence is required to fish the recreational fishery that has a limited season and open waters.

Other names: Australian whitebait, whitebait.



BL12080