

RECOMMENDATION

NANNOPERCA AUSTRALIS - SOUTHERN PYGMY PERCH

The Fisheries Scientific Committee, established under Part 7A of the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* (the Act), has made a recommendation to list *Nannoperca australis*, southern pygmy perch, as a VULNERABLE SPECIES in Schedule 5 of the Act.

The listing of Vulnerable Species is provided for by Part 7A, Division 2 of the Act.

The Fisheries Scientific Committee has found that:

1. Southern pygmy perch, *Nannoperca australis* Günther, 1861 of the family Nannopercidae, has also been known as *Nannoperca riverinae*, *Paradules leetus*, and *Microperca tasmaniae*.
2. *Nannoperca australis* has been recorded throughout the Murrumbidgee and Murray River Systems, coastal South Australia and Victoria, King and Flinders Islands in Bass Strait and northern flowing streams in north-eastern Tasmania. The species is described and figured in Kuitert, R.H., Humphries, P.A., and Arthington, A.H., 1996, Family Nannopercidae - Pygmy perches, in McDowall, R.M. (ed.) Freshwater fishes of south-eastern Australia, where details of its distribution are also given.
3. *Nannoperca australis* is a small sized fish, generally less than 85mm in length, and can live for more than 5 years. This species prefers slow-flowing waters, and still, vegetated habitats in small streams, lakes, billabongs and wetlands. Historical records show that the species was common in NSW in the Murrumbidgee catchment upstream from Narrandera and in tributaries of the Murray River.
4. *Nannoperca australis* has suffered a population decline in NSW. It is now absent from the Murrumbidgee River system and the Murray River population has contracted to a number of billabongs and small creeks in the Albury area. Recently it has also been recorded from the Holbrook area in the Billabong Creek.
5. *Nannoperca australis* is not currently included as a threatened species on any State or Commonwealth list. However, it is totally protected in South Australia.
6. The causes of decline in *Nannoperca australis* are likely to include:
 - loss of aquatic vegetation;
 - alienation of floodplain habitats by flood mitigation works e.g., levees;
 - seasonal flow reversal;
 - spawning failures due to cold water releases from dams; and

- predation by, and competition with, introduced species such as redfin perch and gambusia.
7. In light of 3, 4, 5 and 6 above, the Fisheries Scientific Committee is of the opinion that *Nannoperca australis* is likely to become endangered unless the circumstances and factors threatening its survival or evolutionary development cease to operate. Therefore, the species qualifies for inclusion in Schedule 5 of the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* as a VULNERABLE SPECIES.

Dr Andrew Sanger
Chairperson
Fisheries Scientific Committee