

Fish of the Bungle Bungle Area

by
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ANNOTATED SPECIES LIST

Nomenclature, order and comments on wider distribution are from Allen (1982) or Merrick and Schmida (1984).

FRESHWATER HERRING (BONY BREAM) *Nematolosa erebi*.

4 specimens.

Common in large pools of the Ord River and Osmand Creek.

Allen: Known from throughout the Kimberley and Pilbara regions. Usually found in slow-flowing water or large rocky pools.

FORK-TAILED (BLUE) CATFISH *Arius graeffei*.

3 specimens.

Reasonably common in larger pools of the Ord River and Osmand Creek.

Allen: Common in the major river systems of the Kimberley.

COMMON EEL-TAILED CATFISH *Neosilurus hyrtlü*.
5 specimens.

Common throughout the Ord River and Osmand Creek systems, including springs, small flowing creeks and large isolated pools.

Allen: Widespread throughout the Pilbara and Kimberley regions; found in a variety of habitats.

WESTERN RAINBOWFISH *Melanotaenia splendida*.

8 specimens.

Very common throughout the Ord River and Osmand Creek systems, in almost all springs, small flowing creeks and large isolated pools.

Allen: Ranges widely in northern and eastern Australia, perhaps the most abundant inland species of northern waters.

RETICULATED GLASSFISH *Ambassis macleayi*.

In small numbers at Blue Holes on the Ord River.

Allen: Known in Western Australia only from the Ord and Carson River systems (distributed also in Northern Territory, Queensland and New Guinea).

GIANT GLASSFISH *Parambassis gulliveri*.

2 specimen.

Common at Blue Holes on the Ord River.

Allen: Known in Western Australia only from the Ord River system, but occurring also in Northern Territory, Queensland and New Guinea.

BARRED GRUNTER *Amniatoba percoides*.

7 specimens.

Very common throughout the Ord River and Osmand Creek systems, mostly in larger pools.

Allen: Throughout the Kimberley and Pilbara region, also in Northern Territory and Queensland.

SOOTY GRUNTER (BLACK BREAM) *Hephaestus jenkinsi*.

2 specimens.

Very common throughout the Ord River and Osmand Creek systems, especially in relatively deep pools and springs.

Allen: Throughout the Kimberley in large watercourses, also in Northern Territory.

SPANGLED PERCH *Leiopetherapon unicolor*.

2 specimens.

Very common throughout the Ord River and Osmand Creek systems, in pools, springs and flowing creeks.

Allen: Throughout the Kimberley and Pilbara regions, one of the most widespread inland species.

SEVEN-SPOT ARCHERFISH *Toxotes chatareus*.

4 specimens.

Common in the Ord River and Osmand Creek systems, particularly in large deep pools flanked by dense vegetation.

Allen: Common throughout far northern Australia.

GUDGEON *Mogurnda* sp.

3 specimens.

Common at Wulwuldji Springs. Status elsewhere uncertain. Probably Purple-spotted Gudgeon (*Mogurnda mogurnda*).

Allen: Throughout the Kimberley, also across northern Australia and New Guinea, in clear, slow-flowing streams.

GIANT GUDGEON (SLEEPY COD) *Oxyeleotris herwerdenii*.

SLEEPER GUDGEON (SLEEPY COD) *Oxyeleotris lineolatus*.

3 specimens.

Common in the Ord River and Osmand Creek systems, particularly in large isolated pools. Both species are probably present, but no definite identification to hand yet. Allen: Throughout the Kimberley, also across northern Australia and New Guinea.

GOLDEN GOBY *Glossogobius aureus*.

4 specimens.

Recorded from large pools on sand on the Ord River at Kitty's Knob and on the Osmand Creek.

TAILED SOLE *Aseraggodes klunzingeri*.

4 specimens.

Recorded from one large pool on the Ord River near Kitty's Knob. Allen: Primarily a marine fish, sometimes entering fresh waters. Known from lower to middle reaches of the Ord, Victoria and Alligator Rivers systems.

COMMENTS

The fish fauna of the Bungle Bungle area is generally unspectacular in terms of the diversity of species and the geographic distribution of species recorded. All species except the Tailed Sole are known to be common in the Ord River system, and most are widespread species in the Kimberley and across northern Australia.

Nonetheless it is remarkable that in this semi-arid region almost every water body has a high diversity and density of fish, with several species (e.g. Western Rainbowfish, Barred Grunter and Spangled Perch) being

virtually ubiquitous. The 15 species recorded in this survey constitute about 5 per cent of the vertebrate fauna known from the Bungle Bungle, a component which should not be neglected in consideration of that fauna.

Several additional fish species may be expected to occur in the Bungle Bungle region, especially during the wet season, when the Ord River is in flow. Those most likely are Sailfin Glassfish (*Ambassis agrammus*) (the common glassfish of the Kimberley, widely distributed in slow-flowing streams, lakes and billabongs), Rendahl's Catfish (*Copidoglanis rendahli*) (known from the Ord River system), Butler's Grunter (*Syncomistes butleri*) (known from rocky pools of the Ord River), the Mullet (*Liza diadema*), the Strawman (*Quirichthys stramineus*) (common in Lake Argyle), Freshwater Long-Tom (*Strongylura krefftii*) (which is widespread in the larger rivers of the Kimberley, and may occur hundreds of kilometres upstream), Mouth Almighty (*Glossamia aprion*) (known from the south and east Kimberley, occurring especially in weedy areas along the edges of streams and in billabongs) and Carp Gudgeon (*Hypseleotris compressa*) (widely distributed in the Kimberley). Further sampling of the Ord River at this time should establish the status of these species in the Bungle Bungle area.

The fish fauna may not have escaped totally the consequences of land degradation associated with almost a century of grazing. Small isolated pools have been trampled or been consumed by stock, erosion has led to massive build-up of silt in the main river systems and the consequent shrinking of large pools (Anon. 1986), riparian vegetation has been removed or replaced with alien species, and changes in run-off and interception rates may have shortened the vital period when water is put in to the system during the wet season.