

New Zealand has 26 native species of freshwater fish, yet because many are cryptic and nocturnal they go largely unnoticed. Braided rivers are important habitat for native fish such as common and upland bullies, and whitebait species such as kōaro, common river galaxias, and two distinctive high country species, the long-jawed and alpine galaxias.

The introduced fish, rainbow and brown trout, quinnat salmon and sockeye salmon are all fished in the Upper Waitaki Basin. The Ahuriri River is famous for its fishing. Good catches can also be made from the canals.

During the autumn, adult trout move upstream to breed. The female lays her hundreds of eggs in a shallow hole, formed by sweeping her tail fin across the stream bed. As soon as the male fish has fertilized them, the eggs are covered by gravel until they hatch. When trout "rise", they come to the surface to feed on hatching insects such as mayfly.

Trout are important predators of native fish and invertebrates and they have driven some local populations to extinction.

Note: Further material can be found in Section 25 – Will Spry; Graeme Hughes



Upland bully

Department of Conservation

Activities

- 1 Describe how a cockabully blends in with its surroundings.
- 2 Catch some cockabullies and keep them in an aquarium. Draw their life cycle.
- 3 Find out about the different species of whitebait. Describe their breeding cycle.
- 4 What is the difference between rainbow trout and brown trout?
- 5 Find out about the introduction of trout into New Zealand.
- 6 Ask a trout fisherman to show you a dry fly and explain how it is used.
- 7 Talk to people who have been fishing in your area about any changes they have noticed. If fish numbers are down, see if you can find out the cause. With the help of Fish and Game, your regional council and DOC, as a class undertake to improve the habitats of fish in your area.