

New Zealand's most endangered fish species

The streams and rivers that flow through Otago are home to a group of fascinating native freshwater fish found nowhere else on Earth. These fish belong to an ancient, scaleless fish family called Galaxiidae, named for the galaxy-like gold flecks and patterns adorning their backs.

Unlike whitebait, which migrate to sea, some non-migratory galaxiid species live out their entire life in the stream or river in which they hatched. Over millennia, these populations of galaxiids were isolated by geological events such as earthquakes and glacial movement. They evolved into distinct species, each with their own individual features and stories. Today, Otago is a biodiversity 'hot spot', home to 13 of New Zealand's most endangered non-migratory galaxiids.

This brochure puts the spotlight on Taieri flathead galaxias.

See the companion brochures on Eldon's, Dusky, Teviot flathead, Lowland longjaw, Clutha flathead, Central Otago roundhead, Canterbury, Southern flathead, Gollum, and Nevis galaxias.

Help Taieri flathead galaxiids in your neighbourhood

- When repairing or replacing culverts or structures in streams, talk to someone at DOC to make sure they're compatible with protecting native fish. Barriers can help prevent galaxiids from being eaten by other fish.
- Fence off spawning areas in spring.
- Protect breeding grounds by restoring and protecting vegetation on stream banks and wetlands. Planting alongside streams also helps create shade, which galaxiids love, and reduces nutrient run-off.
- Check, Clean and Dry to prevent the spread of aquatic pests – fish such as koi carp and aquatic weeds such as didymo can wreak havoc on our freshwater environments.

For more information

Contact your local DOC office

Visit www.doc.govt.nz

Read *A photographic guide to freshwater fishes of New Zealand* by McQueen and Morris (2013), New Holland Publishers (NZ) Ltd

Cover: Taieri River tributary *Photo: DOC*
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Galaxiids – Otago's unique freshwater fish



Taieri flathead galaxias



- *Learn about these fascinating and rare creatures*
- *Find out how you can help save them in your neighbourhood*

Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Taieri flathead galaxias *Galaxias depressiceps*

Taieri flatheads are found in tributaries of the Taieri, Waikouaiti and Shag rivers, and as far as Akatore Creek in the north.

They make their home in headwater streams that are small enough to step across and are surrounded by grasses and tussock.

Features

- A distinctly flattened head and a pointy nose give it a rather snooty look (its scientific name '*depressiceps*' translates to 'pressed down head')
- An olive-grey to golden brown body with dark-brown camouflage markings over their entire body
- Typically grow up to 100 mm in length but can get to 150 mm
- Feed on small stream invertebrates such as mayflies and stoneflies
- Spawn in spring (October to November) laying tiny 2 mm eggs on the underside of rocks in riffle parts of the streams or rivers
- Can live up to 8 years



Taieri flathead galaxias Photo: rodmorris.co.nz

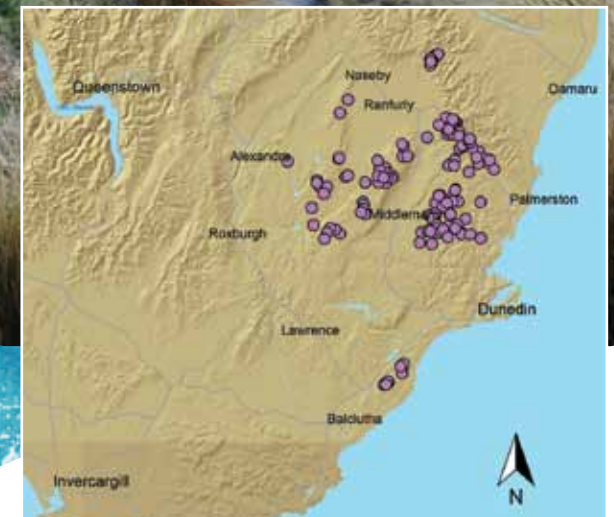
Classified as 'Nationally Vulnerable', Taieri flatheads share the same threat status as our great spotted kiwi. Their entire remaining habitats total only 21 hectares.



Taieri flathead galaxias eggs Photo: DOC

Threats

Over the last decade, we have lost 25% of known galaxiid populations. This can be directly linked to the spread of sports fish (trout and brook char), which eat galaxiids; and changes in land use such as stock access to streams, reduction of native vegetation, land development and forest harvesting. These land use changes impact on the streams in which galaxiids live, increasing sedimentation, changing natural flows through water abstraction, and reducing the amount of habitat available for spawning.



Locations of Taieri flathead galaxias