

## 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 Teviot flathead galaxias.*

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

## Help Teviot 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](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

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

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# Galaxiids – Otago's unique freshwater fish



## Teviot 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

## Teviot flathead *Galaxias Galaxias 'Teviot'*

Teviot galaxias populations remain in just one area on earth – in a few headwater streams small enough to step across in the Teviot River, surrounding Lake Onslow.

Their total remaining habitat can fit in an area less than a hectare.

### Features

- Hardy fish withstanding both snowy winters and hot, dry summers
- Solid tubular body with relatively large eyes and burly fins; when you place a young Teviot in your hand it will crawl across it like a lizard, using its strong fins
- Light-to-medium-brown terracotta colourings with dark-brown splotches and crescents
- Their outer eyes and bodies have a gold dusting all over them
- Typically grow to up to 160 mm in length
- Difficult to spot during the day, hiding in tussock
- Feed on small stream invertebrates such as mayflies and stoneflies
- Spawn in spring (October to November), laying tiny 2 mm eggs during flood flows in streamside vegetation or small 'caves' in stream banks
- Can live up to 20 years



Teviot flathead galaxias Photo: Simon Madill

With only a handful of remaining populations, Teviot flathead galaxias are becoming increasingly rare. Classified as 'Nationally Critical', they share the same threat status as the kākāpō, making them one of New Zealand's most endangered galaxiids.



Teviot flathead galaxias eggs Photo: DOC

### Threats

Over the last decade, 3 out of 7 known Teviot populations have been lost. 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 Teviot flathead galaxias