Whitebait are the babies of five New Zealand freshwater fish species

These are inanga, kōaro, banded kōkopu, shortjaw kōkopu and giant kōkopu. They are all native to New Zealand – this means they have not been introduced. Three of them (banded kōkopu, shortjaw kōkopu and giant kōkopu) are endemic – they are found nowhere else in the world! Whitebait all look alike, but the adults look different– and swim and live in different places too.

Whitebait must move between habitats to grow. They live at sea as babies, but as adults they live in rivers, where they lay eggs on riverbanks during autumn floods. A few weeks later when the river next floods the eggs; the tiny young whitebait (called larvae) hatch and get washed out to sea. They spend the next 4–6 months getting bigger, then return to our rivers to find a home to grow into adults. This movement between the ocean and rivers is called migration.

But it’s not easy finding a good home. We humans use culverts, dams and floodgates to help us cross or control rivers. These structures can stop fish migrating to up- and downstream habitats.

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**SPOT THE DIFFERENCE**

Can you spot the five differences between the two pictures? Which stream would whitebait like?
**Migration Maze**

Follow the rivers to get these whitebait to their homes.

**Quick Quiz**

1. Name something that could stop whitebait swimming upstream from the sea.
2. Which whitebait species are found only in New Zealand?
3. Where do adult whitebait lay their eggs?

**We can help whitebait survive**

We can help whitebait by building our structures so whitebait can swim through them without barriers in their way. We can also put fish ladders or fish passes on structures, to help fish swim over or through them.

We should also make sure we don’t catch all of them during whitebait season, so some can escape upstream to grow new families.

**Wordfind**

Can you find the 14 words hidden below?

NATIVE, FISH, WHITEBAIT, DAM, CULVERT, WEIR, FISHING, SWIMMING, PASSAGE, INANGA, RIVER, FRESHWATER, SEA, KŌARO

The words go up, down, across, backwards and at an angle. Use the remaining letters to tell us how to explain what ‘fish passage’ is.

**Fact:**

Inanga like to live near the sea in lowland streams and wetlands, and are not very good swimmers. But kōaro like to swim far up into the rivers – they can even climb big waterfalls!

**Longest River in New Zealand**

Tell us the name of the longest river in New Zealand using the number/letter code below.

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**Spot the difference answers:** Whitebait would like the left stream more! The five differences are: 1) rubbish has been added; 2) the culvert is perched (has a jump for fish not within the water); 3) grass/plants are missing from the bank that give shade, food and a place to lay eggs; 4) fewer whitebait compared to good stream; 5) no log/stones.

**Longest river in New Zealand answer:** Waikato River (425 km).

**Wordfind answer:** (28) Fish migrating within waterways.