

Giant kokopu

Galaxias argenteus

Native

Declining

Photo: Bruno David

This threatened species of fish is currently classified as 'declining'. They are one of five species that are part of the whitebait run, which include 4 other members of the *Galaxias* genus. Giant kokopu like most of the native fish fauna are endemic meaning they are found only here in New Zealand.

These fish are thought to mature at around two or three years of age and spawn many thousands of eggs. The larvae go to sea for four months before returning as whitebait (40-50mm long) where they migrate upstream and live out their lives (15+ years). They may pass through rivers, streams and drains on their way to their adult habitat.

The adults are nocturnal predators of insects that fall into the stream. Fully grown adults have amazing patterning and at that stage should not be confused with other fish. The profusion of small olive and gold spots, lines and rings are apparent over time and can be used to identify the same fish over a number of years. Adult giant kokopu reach around 300-400mm in length.

In our 2011/2012 survey we found forty-seven giant kokopu ranging from 41 mm to 267 mm, three were found in 2013/14 ranging from 47 mm to 295 mm, twenty were found in the 2014/15 season ranging from 37 mm to 314 mm, three in 2015/16 ranging from 126 mm to 186 mm, seven in 2016/17 ranging from 74 mm to 274 mm and in the 2017/18 survey seventy giant kokopu were found, ranging from 37 mm to 225 mm.



Photo: The Natural Heritage Collection (<http://www.nhc.net.nz/index/fresh-water-fish-new-zealand/freshwater-fish.htm>)