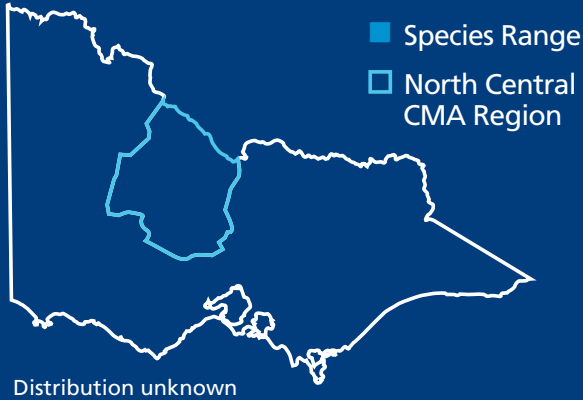


# Murray Hardyhead (*Craterocephalus fluviatilis*)

Tail fin shape



**Family:** Atherinidae

**Other common names:** None known

**Description:** The Murray Hardyhead is a small, laterally compressed fish. It has a small mouth and large silvery eyes. Scales on top of the head are large and irregular shaped. It is silver to golden in colour, at times with a black stripe mid-laterally. It can be distinguished by its darker scale margins on its back. The adult size is about 40-65 mm (maximum size is about 82 mm). This species can be confused with the Un-specked Hardyhead and the juvenile Murray-Darling Rainbowfish. It has historically been confused with the Lake Eyre Hardyhead.

**Fins:** Dorsal, pectoral, pelvic and anal fins are present. The tail is moderately forked.

**Habitat:** Historically found in rivers, ephemeral lakes and billabongs in open, slow flowing or still water associated with dense aquatic vegetation over sandy or silty substrates. More recently this species is predominantly found in saline wetlands, which are suspected to be refuge habitat.

**Conservation status & distribution:** The species is listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, is endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and is listed as endangered under the *International Union for Conservation of Nature red list 2012*.

Historically common in lowland areas of the Murray-Darling Basin. Only four remnant populations remain in Victoria, two of which are in the Kerang area. This species only occurs in Australia and less than a total of seven populations remain.

**Breeding:** Spawning generally occurs over an extended breeding season, most commonly from spring to early autumn. Individuals only spawn once in their life-time and die soon after spawning.

**Eggs:** Lays adhesive eggs which are approximately 1.5 mm in diameter on submerged aquatic vegetation.

**Diet:** Primarily eats micro-crustaceans, some aquatic insects and algae.

**Threats:** The reasons for its dramatic decline are unknown, but it is suspected that habitat degradation, river regulation, and the impacts of alien species, in particular Eastern Gambusia, are contributing threats.

**Interesting facts and features:** The Murray Hardyhead is one of the most salt tolerant fish species found within inland Australia, adults having recently been found in waters which were more than one and a half times more saline than seawater.

## Spawning time

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
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The North Central Catchment Management Authority acknowledges Aboriginal Traditional Owners within the region, their rich culture and spiritual connection to Country. We also recognise and acknowledge the contribution and interest of Aboriginal people and organisations in land and natural resource management.

The information on this Fact Sheet is extracted from the North Central Waterwatch Fish Field Guide. Please visit the North Central Catchment Management Authority website, [www.nccma.vic.gov.au](http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au) for more information.

