

Short-headed Lamprey (*Mordacia mordax*)

Tail fin shape

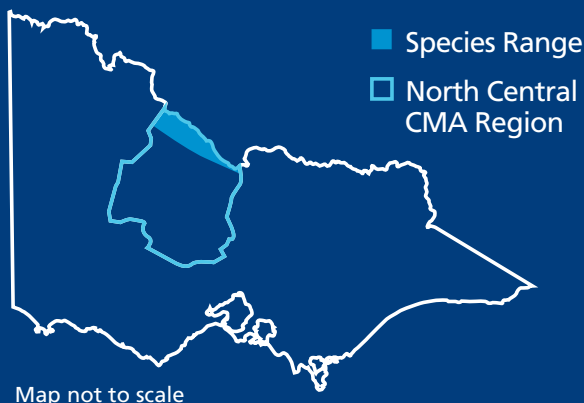


Photo Michael Hammer

Family: Mordaciidae

Other common names: None known

Description: The Short-headed Lamprey is a slender eel-like fish. The adult size is about 300-440 mm in length (maximum size is about 500 mm). Juveniles are a brown colour, while adults can be a bluey-grey with a silver belly in the marine (ocean) phase, or a dull grey when migrating upstream in freshwater for spawning.

Fins: Two dorsal fins are present near the caudal fin.

Habitat: Spends most of its adult life in the marine environment, however, younger Short-headed Lamprey migrate upstream into fast flowing freshwater streams which have a muddy, sandy or silt substrate.

Conservation status & distribution: Usually restricted to the lower and mid-Murray-Darling Basin. Found in coastal rivers in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania. Although individuals are known to travel some distance upstream from the Murray Rivers' mouth. The species is likely to be rare in the North Central CMA region. Endangered in South Australia.

Breeding: Spawning occurs from spring to summer after migration from the sea into the river. Before spawning they are usually nocturnal and burrow into the substrate during the day. Adults die shortly after spawning.

Eggs: 3,800-13,400 small eggs (0.3 to 0.5 mm in diameter) are deposited into depressions in the substrate in shallow, fast flowing water.

Diet: The Juvenile's diet consists of algae, detritus and micro-organisms. After metamorphosis they parasitise other fish by creating a hole in the side of a host fish through which they feed on blood and muscle.

Threats: Potential threats include in-stream barriers to movement, especially during the spawning season. This species can however climb wet vertical surfaces.

Interesting facts and features: The Short-headed Lamprey lacks a jaw. Juveniles instead have two large tricuspid teeth on an oral disc. As adults, they have a well developed oral disc with sharp, radially arranged tooth plates.

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 for more information.

