

SUMMARY OF FISHING REGULATIONS

The Department of Conservation is responsible for managing New Zealand's whitebait fisheries. This can be done more efficiently and effectively with the help and support of whitebait fishers.

This is a summary of the whitebaiting regulations highlighting the main points, and some of the issues affecting the fishery.

Note 1: This pamphlet does not relate to the West Coast of the South Island where there are separate whitebait fishing regulations. Information on the West Coast is available on a separate pamphlet or contact the Department of Conservation at Hokitika, phone (03)755-8301.

Note 2: This information is a guide only, it has no legal standing, nor does it contain all the rules. Please familiarise yourself with the Whitebait Fishing Regulations 1994 and 1995 amendments. These can be obtained from any Bennetts or Government Bookshop.

Fishing Season

In all areas of New Zealand except the West Coast of the South Island and the Chatham Islands the season is open between 15 August and 30 November (inclusive). The Chatham Islands season runs from 1 December to the last day of February (inclusive).

The taking of whitebait at other times is prohibited.

Fishing is only permitted between 5am and 8pm OR between 6am and 9pm when New Zealand Daylight Saving is being observed.

Fishing gear

"Fishing gear" includes all nets, screens, lines, devices or things that are used to take whitebait or are capable of being used to take whitebait.

Whitebait nets should not have a mouth larger than 4.5 metres measured on the inside of the net frame; have framing material that is wider than 120mm; or be longer than 3.5m in length.

"Drag net" means any net or part of a net (including any warp, rope, chain, material or device used in conjunction

with, or attached to, the net) that a) is weighted on the bottom edge; and b) is operated by surrounding any whitebait and being drawn over the bed of any waters or through any water to the shore.

No person can set or use more than one whitebait net at a time.

No fishing gear should:

- exceed more than one third of the water channel width;
- be used in conjunction with another person to exceed more than one third of the channel width;
- exceed six metres in total length.

Every person who sets or uses a whitebait net must remain within 10 metres of the net. Fishing gear must be removed from the water at the end of fishing or the end of the day, whichever is the earlier.

General

No person shall fish for whitebait within 20m of any tide gate, flood gate, confluence or culvert or fish from any bridge.

No person shall possess whitebait in conjunction with any whitebait net that is not permitted to be used under the whitebait regulations whether or not that net is being used in fishing at the time.

Unlawfully taken fish shall be immediately and carefully returned to the waters from which they were taken.

No person shall discard or dump on shore any fish taken when fishing for whitebait.

Nothing in these regulations permits any person fishing for whitebait to interfere with, alter or modify the natural bed or banks of any river, stream, estuary or channel.

Penalties

Persons offending against these regulations may be fined up to \$5000.

WHITEBAIT BIOLOGY

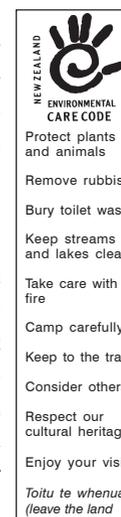
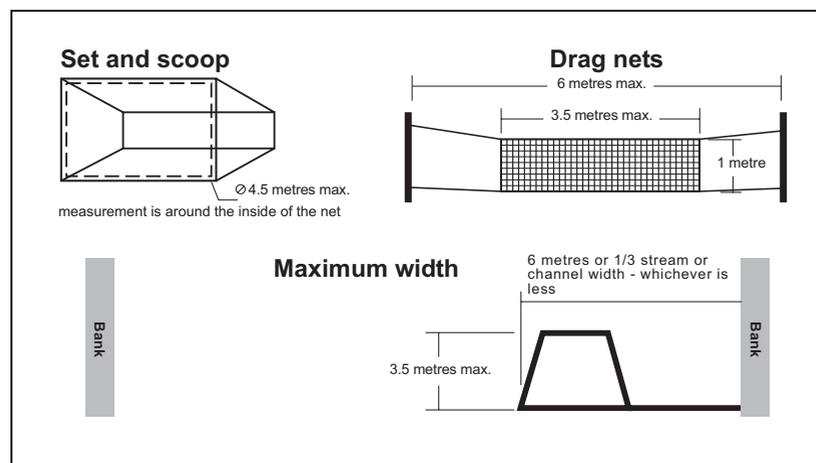
Whitebait catch consists primarily of the young of three species: inanga (*Galaxias maculatus*), koaro (*G. brevipinnis*) and banded kokopu (*G. fasciatus*); inanga is by far the most commonly caught species.

Giant kokopu (*G. argenteus*), short-jawed kokopu (*G. postvectis*) and smelt (*Retropinna retropinna*) are also occasionally present along with the young of many other fish such as eels, bullies and trout.

All whitebait species spend part of their life cycle in fresh water and part in the sea. Tiny fish hatch in late autumn and are carried along rivers out to sea where they live and grow over the winter.

In late winter and early spring whitebait migrate back up rivers and streams, finally settling and growing in bush covered streams and swamps. The start of the migration is thought to be influenced by river flows (i.e. shortly after floods) and phases of the moon.

Mature inanga adults migrate downstream to lower river sections and estuaries to spawn in grasses covered by water during spring tides. The eggs remain in the grass until the next spring tide covers them again when the young hatch and are carried out to sea. The spawning habits of other whitebait species are not well known.



PHYSICAL HABITATS

The five galaxiid species are found in many different habitats from lowland swamps to rocky streams. Their presence appears to be closely tied to overhead cover and waterside vegetation.

Short-jawed kokopu and giant kokopu live in swampy and heavily vegetated streams, often in pools over a mud bottom. Banded kokopu and koaro prefer fast flowing rocky bottomed streams with forest cover. Inanga are generally found in lowland waters that are closer to the sea.

One of the major problems affecting the whitebait fishery is the destruction of habitat for egg laying or adult fish. As whitebait adults tend to live in natural swamps and bush covered streams it is in the best interest of whitebaiters to ensure that adequate areas of these habitats remain.

The Department of Conservation has been active in identifying whitebait spawning habitat and arranging for its protection. Protection has involved seeking the co-operation of landowners to have spawning areas fenced off from stock. The department sees the protection of whitebait spawning habitat as playing a major role in enhancing the lasting viability of the fishery.

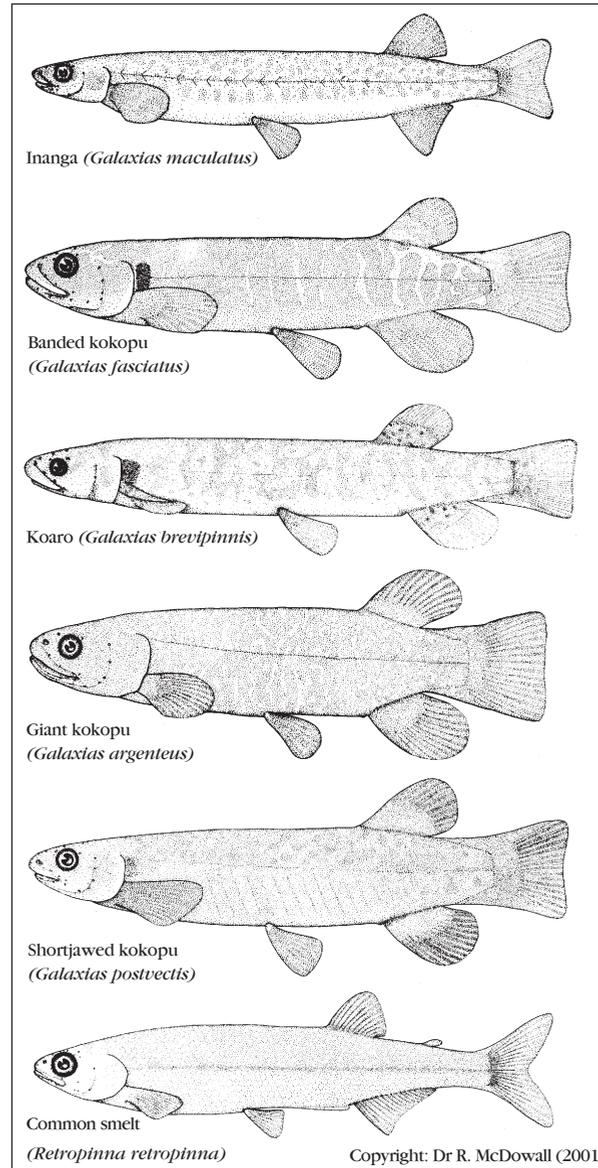
Another major problem is barriers that stop young fish from getting to adult habitat. Please note that whitebait are native fish and the giant and short-jawed kokopu are under threat in many areas.

Your assistance in keeping the whitebait fishery healthy not only benefits you, but the health of New Zealand's natural living systems. Don't take more than you need.

If you have any further enquiries, please contact your nearest Department of Conservation conservancy or area office.



ADULT WHITEBAIT SPECIES



Produced by:
Department of Conservation, August 2003
Crown Copyright

Whitebait

Information & fishing regulations

FOR THE WHOLE OF NEW ZEALAND EXCEPT THE WEST COAST OF THE SOUTH ISLAND



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai