

Seven Creeks Fish Survey 2024



Key points

- 123 Trout cod and 82 Macquarie perch were captured during the 2024 surveys which is a significant decrease from the numbers captured in 2023.
- High prevalence of the parasitic anchor worm, *Lernaea* was observed on native fish in the creek for the second consecutive year.
- River Blackfish numbers continue to decline.

Seven Creeks naturally fluctuates between periods of drought and periods of flooding. The extremely low and cease to flow events from Spring 2018 to Summer 2020 had detrimental impacts on native fish populations within the creek. Flooding such as that experienced in 2022 and 2023 particularly during fish breeding seasons (spring-summer) has also impacted recruitment success.

Seven Creeks is unique as it sustains populations of two nationally endangered fish species - Macquarie perch and Trout cod. Both species are found in a 15km section of the Seven Creeks between Polly McQuinn's weir and just below Galls Gap Road. Fish surveys are undertaken regularly to monitor these important fish populations.

Survey sites

During February and March 2024, 30 sites were surveyed using both electrofishing and fyke nets. This included nine sites downstream of Galls Gap Road Bridge, 19 sites between Gooram Falls and Galls Gap Road (long term monitoring reach) as well as two sites above Gooram Falls. All fish captured were measured for total length (mm) and the larger bodied fish were also weighed.



Young of Year – Trout Cod, Seven Creeks. Photo credit: ARI.

Results

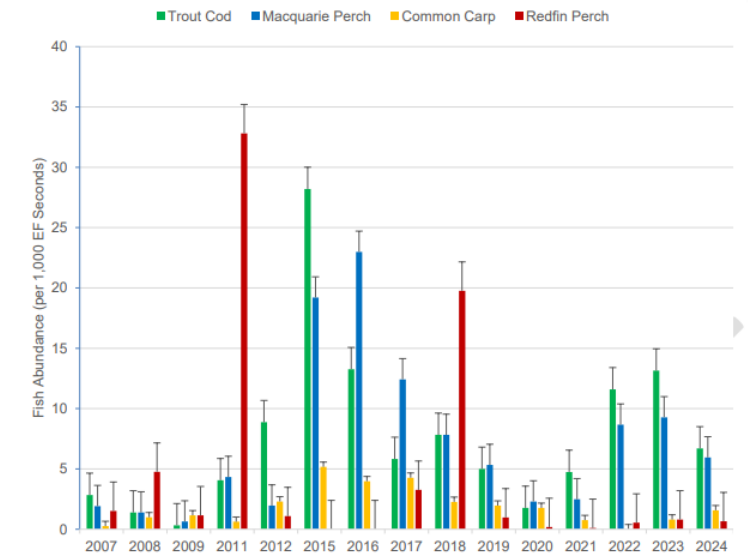
During the 2024 surveys, 267 fish were captured or observed. The table below provides a breakdown of species and locations of where fish and other fauna were captured.

Common Name	Below Galls Gap Road - 1 km, 9 sites	Galls Gap Rd to Gooram Falls - Long term monitoring reach	Above Gooram Falls (2 sites)	Total
Trout cod	9	80	34	123
Macquarie perch	10	72		82
River blackfish		2		2
Two-spined blackfish				0
Golden Perch	3	2		5
Mountain galaxias	4	10		14
Australian Smelt				0
Carp gudgeon		1		1
Southern pygmy perch				0
Common yabby	y	y		0
Freshwater crayfish				0
Common long-neck turtle				0
Platypus				0
Carp*	5	19		24
Goldfish*		1		1
Redfin*	3	9		12
Brown trout*		1		1
Mosquitofish*		2		2
Total				267
*exotic species				

Table 1. Fish and fauna capture 2024

Trout Cod

A total of 123 Trout Cod were captured including 80 in the long-term monitoring reach below Gooram Falls. This is a significant decrease from last year where 249 Trout Cod were captured, 180 of which were found in the long-term monitoring reach. This decrease seems to be driven by the detection of less 1+ year old fish compared to last year, however juveniles still made up most of the total catch. High numbers of young of year were recorded indicating successful breeding in 2023/2024.



The standardised abundance of Trout cod, Macquarie perch, carp & redfin in Seven Creeks at the long-term monitoring site (Galls Gap Rd to Gooram Falls) between 2007 and 2024.

Macquarie Perch

Macquarie perch numbers were also down on last year (see Table 1) with 82 fish captured. The long-term monitoring reach below Gooram Falls continues to be the strong-hold for the population with no fish detected above Gooram Falls this year. Fish estimated to be three years old were the dominate size class with sub adult/adult numbers remaining stable over the last two years. Again, low number of fish less than one-year-old were detected for the fourth year in a row, indicating poor recruitment.

The parasitic anchor worm *Lernaea* as well as ulcers/lesions were observed on several Macquarie perch for the second consecutive year. The likely reason for this is weakened or stressed fish because of injury caused by recent floods.



Diseased Macquarie perch

Translocation and liberation

This year, 12 Macquarie perch ranging in size from 200-340mm were translocated from Seven Creeks to King Parrot Creek to improve gene-flow. (Seven Creeks Fish Survey 2023 has more information).

Victorian Fisheries Authority released 2800 Macquarie perch and 2100 Trout cod fingerlings into the creek at Strathbogie to bolster populations and genetic diversity.

River Blackfish

River Blackfish numbers continue to decline with only two fish captured this survey, both from above Gooram Falls which is historically where the species has been recorded.

Introduced Species

Introduced species made up 15 per cent of the total catch this year (See Table One) which is a slight increase from last year, although pleasingly numbers remain reasonably low.