

Fauna fact sheet

Australian Lungfish

Scientific Name: *Neoceratodus forsteri*

Common Name: Queensland Lungfish

Status: EPBC Act (1999): Vulnerable

Distribution: Mary and Burnett Rivers (introduced to Brisbane and North Pine Rivers)

Habitat: Slow flowing sections of river, preferring pools with overhanging riparian (riverside) vegetation, woody debris in the water. Shallow glides with dense aquatic plant beds are essential for spawning, safety of juveniles and feeding.

Description: Long heavy bodied freshwater fish with large overlapping scales. Adults 1 to 1.5m length. Single lung as well as gills. Wide flat head with small mouth, large crushing teeth and small eyes. Sturdy pectoral and pelvic fins resembling flippers. Dull brown to olive-green in colour, sometimes with dark blotches. Whitish to deep pink or orange belly.

Habits: Long lived and slow growing. Adults have grinding plates and are omnivorous, feeding on small fish, tadpoles, mussels, snails, shrimps and some aquatic plant material. Able to breathe aquatically using its gills, and aurally using its single lung. During spawning, attaches eggs to submerged aquatic plants in shallow glides. Young have pointy teeth and are carnivorous.

Comments: Threatened fish. Declines in population due to loss of habitat and degraded water quality. Described as a living fossil, having changed little over millions of years.



Photo courtesy of Günther Schmida