



Aotearoa New Zealand Native Whitebait Species

Taonga Species & Important Mahinga Kai

ĪNANGA 	At Risk – Declining	Scientific name	<i>Galaxias maculatus</i>
		Life span	1 year
		Size of adults	avg. 100 mm max. 190 mm
		Colouring	Cream-white body with greenish-olive spotting on back & sides with a silvery belly.
		Body shape	Slender body with tapered head & forked tail.
		Mouth/jaw shape	Small mouth (reaching back only to the front of the eye) with jaws equal in length.
		Dorsal & anal fin alignment	Dorsal fin starts directly above anal fin.
		Pectoral fins	Small pectoral fins that sit higher on the body than the other whitebait species.
		Other interesting info	Most common, smallest & shortest living of the five species. Only species that can't climb barriers in the river – which means it has a unique set of requirements for survival. Unlike other whitebait, adults swim in shoals & feed during the daytime. Less sensitive to some water pollution than other whitebait & native fish.
KŌARO 	At Risk – Declining	Scientific name	<i>Galaxias brevipinnis</i>
		Life span	15+ years
		Size of adults	avg. 160–180 mm max. 290 mm
		Colouring	Dark greenish or greyish brown with irregular green-brown to olive-gold blotches/stripes, golden speckling in bright light, pale smokey grey to silvery olive belly. Large blue-black spot above/behind the pectoral fin base.
		Body shape	Very elongated/slender/almost tubular body.
		Mouth/jaw shape	Large mouth with much smaller lower jaw.
		Dorsal & anal fin alignment	Dorsal fin originates much closer to the head vs anal fin.
		Pectoral fins	Larger pectoral fins than the other 4 whitebait species, which sit low on the body & are horizontally oriented with grippy ridges on underside.
		Other interesting info	Good climbers & can climb near-vertical rock faces.
BANDED KŌKOPU 	Not Threatened	Scientific name	<i>Galaxias fasciatus</i>
		Life span	15+ years
		Size of adults	avg. 200 mm max. 260 mm
		Colouring	Dark greenish olive with obvious thin, pale, vertical stripes across the sides & over the back. Numerous bands in smaller fish, become narrower & restricted toward back end in larger fish. Silvery olive belly, & small blue-black spot just behind the gill opening.
		Body shape	Large & stout (but less so than giant kōkopu).
		Mouth/jaw shape	Large mouth (reaching back to level with the centre of the eye), jaws roughly equal in length.
		Dorsal & anal fin alignment	Dorsal & anal fins in line (distinguishes it from the giant kōkopu).
		Pectoral fins	Pectoral fins sit low on the sides.
		Other interesting info	Good climbers, & can climb near-vertical rock faces. Generally they're slow moving unless frightened. Can often be seen during the day in forest pools.
GIANT KŌKOPU 	At Risk – Declining	Scientific name	<i>Galaxias argenteus</i>
		Life span	20+ years
		Size of adults	avg. 300–400 mm max. 580 mm
		Colouring	Generally very dark grey-brown (but may range to olive-beige) with broad gold spots/rings on sides, dark bluish-purple spot above/behind pectoral fin base (may not be visible in darker coloured fish).
		Body shape	Stout body with long, broad head.
		Mouth/jaw shape	Large mouth (reaching back behind the eye), jaws roughly equal in length.
		Dorsal & anal fin alignment	Dorsal fin origin very slightly in front of anal fin (distinguishes it from the banded kōkopu).
		Pectoral fins	Pectoral fins sit low on the sides.
		Other interesting info	'Skulking predators' that lurk under cover & make speedy dashes to nab their prey. Poor climbers, & are generally found close to the sea. Largest of all galaxiids globally, but slow growing. They aren't called 'giant' for nothing – some have been found that weigh 2.8 kg.
SHORTJAW KŌKOPU 	Nationally Threatened – Vulnerable	Scientific name	<i>Galaxias postvectis</i>
		Life span	15+ years
		Size of adults	avg. 150–400 mm max. 370 mm
		Colouring	Olive green to dull brown, with indistinct pale marbled or banded pattern. Large/prominent blue-black spot behind the gill opening/above pectoral fin base.
		Body shape	Tapering & rather pointed snout, stout body with rounded trunk.
		Mouth/jaw shape	Large mouth with short lower jaw (possibly a feeding adaptation to scrape insects off rocks in a stream).
		Dorsal & anal fin alignment	Dorsal fin origin slightly in front of anal fin.
		Pectoral fins	Pectoral fins sit low on the sides.
		Other interesting info	Considered a taonga (treasured) species in Aotearoa. Secretive, seldom-seen species. Daytime they hide under riverbanks, fallen logs, large rocks & boulders, & in deep fast-flowing pools. Night-time they feed in pools with a slower flow where they are easier to spot. Can climb, but not as well as banded kōkopu & kōaro.

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THREAT CONSERVATION STATUS (Dunn *et al.*, 2018)

Nationally Threatened	✖ Critical	At Risk	✖ Declining	Other	✚ Not Threatened
	⚠ Endangered		⬆ Recovering		✖ Non-resident Native-coloniser
	○ Vulnerable		✚ Naturally Uncommon		⚠ Introduced & Naturalised