



Gambusia Control Program

Gambusia is an introduced pest fish that resides in the Tamar Estuary. The largest population of Gambusia in Tasmania is located in the Tamar Island Wetlands. Gambusia holbrooki, poses a significant threat to native aquatic species, such as the Green and Gold Frog which is listed as vulnerable under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

The Fish

Gambusia is an introduced pest fish from the Gulf of Mexico in North America. It preys on the eggs and young of native frogs and fish in the Tamar Estuary and competes for food and shelter with native species.

A single female Gambusia and her young can potentially produce nearly a million offspring in one season, therefore the threat to native species is significant.

The listed vulnerable Green and Gold Frog (*Litoria raniformis*) is particularly affected, as Gambusia continue to attack and 'fin nip' larger tadpoles. This drives tadpoles away from the best sources of food and shelter and forces them to spend time hiding rather than feeding. Preventing these local impacts from becoming state wide is of critical importance.

Trapping and Control

While available control methods, including drainage and poisoning are ideal for dams, they are not suitable for more sensitive areas such as the Tamar Island Wetlands.

Research into trap design by the Australian Maritime College has enabled practical, portable and easy to use traps to be made for use by Gambusia managers and community volunteers.

Regular hand netting and trapping at known Gambusia infested sites occurs on a weekly basis. Volunteers regularly participate in the trapping program at the Tamar Island Wetlands.

Community Education

Ensuring the community is aware of the impacts and risk of spreading Gambusia is an important part of the program. Each year the Gambusia Coordinator organises visits to schools and sets up displays at key events to raise awareness and to encourage volunteer participation in the program.

Management Approach

A Gambusia Working Group was established in 2006 through Tamar NRM to coordinate management strategies to control Gambusia around the Tamar Estuary. The working group comprises of representatives from Tamar NRM, NRM North, the Australian Maritime College, the Parks and Wildlife Service, and the Inland Fisheries Service.

Facts:

- The Gambusia Control Program removes up to 20,000 gambusia from infested sites adjacent to the Tamar Estuary each year.
- Green and Gold Frogs are starting to re colonise areas of the Tamar Island Wetlands which were previously infested by Gambusia.
- New volunteers are always welcome. To get involved with the Gambusia trapping program call Tamar NRM on 03 6323 3310.



Photo Courtesy of Neil Armstrong

