

Legal Status of Rudd, Catfish, Goldfish

– Fact Sheet

Linking lake restoration with end users for positive environmental outcomes



Pest Fish in New Zealand

New Zealand has a total of about 36 native freshwater fish species, and a further 22 species (equivalent to 38% of all freshwater fish species) have been introduced from overseas. Like all introduced species, they have some impact on New Zealand's native ecosystems, but some cause more problems than others.

Rudd (Figure 1) is a recent introduction (1972) and is native to Europe/western Asia. Brown bullhead catfish (Figure 2) and goldfish (Figure 3) were introduced into New Zealand in the late 1800s; they originated in eastern USA and eastern Asia, respectively. Rudd and goldfish prefer standing waters but also do well in weedy pools in streams and rivers. Catfish occur in a wide range of habitats but prefer slow-flowing waters.

Potential Impacts

Adult rudd browse preferentially on native aquatic plants and can prevent their re-growth in lakes and degrading native aquatic plant communities. Catfish eat invertebrates, including crayfish/kōura, and potentially compete with eels/tuna for food. They may also degrade water quality through their feeding activities. Goldfish feed on a wide range of invertebrates from bottom habitats, and in so doing stir up sediment and nutrients, affecting water clarity when present in large numbers. They are very tolerant of low dissolved oxygen and warm water temperatures, and therefore can make even highly degraded conditions worse.

How Can They Spread?

Rudd have mostly been spread by illegal stocking to create coarse fisheries, while goldfish are often introduced to waterbodies from disposal of aquarium fish. Catfish can be spread by becoming entangled in fishing nets, and also on boats and trailers. All species may disperse downstream or to floodplain habitats during floods.



Figure 1. Rudd (*Scardinius erythrophthalmus*).
Photo: Steve Moore



Figure 2. Brown bullhead catfish (*Ameiurus nebulosus*).
Photo: Adam Daniel



Figure 3. Goldfish (*Carassius auratus*), showing feral colouration.

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Distribution

- Rudd – in the North Island from Northland-Waikato and Taranaki to Wellington; in the South Island they are known from only a few sites down the east coast from Nelson to South Canterbury and the West Coast (Figure 4).
- Catfish – in the North Island they are widespread in middle regions including Lake Taupo, and in the South Island there are two scattered populations (Figure 4).
- Goldfish – throughout both islands but much more abundant in the North Island (Figure 4).

Legal Status

To prevent the spread of pest fish and help protect New Zealand's aquatic habitats, legal possession has been restricted.

Rudd are classified as:

- 'Noxious fish' under the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations (1983), excluding Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game regions.
- 'Sports fish' under the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations (1983) in the Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game regions only.

Catfish and goldfish have no legal status under the current legislation, but:

- Fishing regulations for recreational and commercial fishers require catfish to be killed on capture.
- Goldfish is covered under the Waikato Region Pest Management Plan with the long-term objective of containment and eradication where practicable.

Recreational fishing for these species is allowed, but outside the Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game region it is illegal to have rudd under control, or to rear, raise or hatch them. A licence is required to catch rudd in the Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game region. Various pest fish species are listed in regional council pest management plans which describe region-specific management objectives.

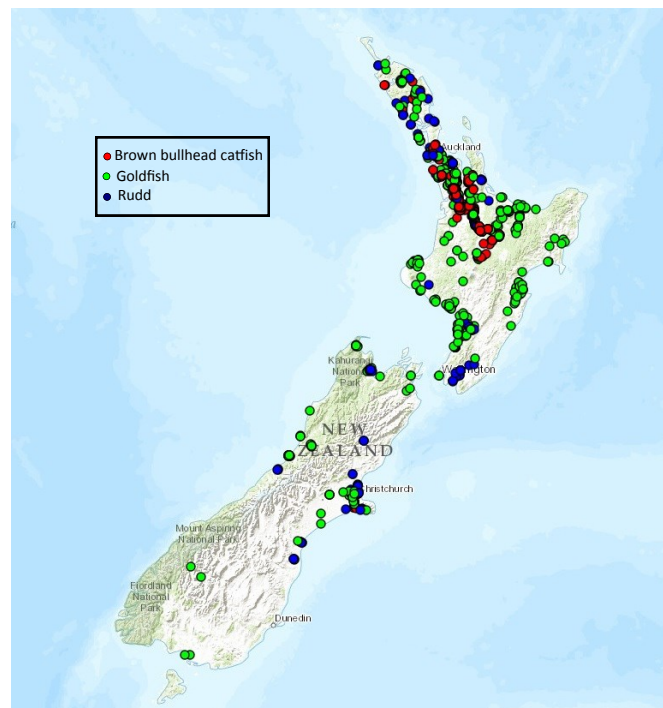


Figure 4. Distribution of brown bullhead catfish, goldfish and rudd from the New Zealand Freshwater Fish database and LERNZdb (includes sites where rudd have been eradicated).

You can Help

Stop the spread of aquatic pests:

- Never transfer plants or fish from one waterway to another.
- Never release unwanted aquarium fish (including goldfish), or other exotic organisms such as plants or invertebrates to waterways.
- Wash your boat and fishing gear carefully after you have taken it out of the water to remove any weed, juvenile fish or fish eggs.
- Soak nets and waders in 5% dishwashing liquid or 10% seawater.
- Always *Check, Clean, Dry* equipment and clothing between waterways.