

# Barramundi

## Fact Sheet



**NOTHING FISHY ABOUT THESE FACTS!**



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**1** 'Barramundi' is an Aboriginal word from the Rockhampton area that means "large-scaled river fish".

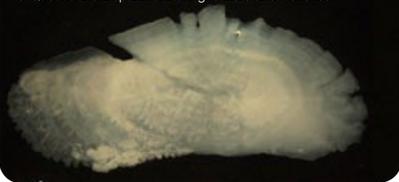
**2** One female barramundi can produce up to 32 million eggs – more than the 500 times the number of people who live in the Gladstone area!

**3** You can estimate the age of a Barramundi by counting the rings on their ear bones (called otoliths). These are 'growth rings' similar to those of a tree! Check out [Queensland Fisheries](#) for more info!

**4** It appears that barramundi prefer to spawn (or lay eggs) on the nights following full or new moons and when the water temperature is between 27°C and 33°C. The prime spawning season is October to January.

**5** The eyes of the barramundi shine ruby-red in torchlight.

**Barramundi Otolith**  
© Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries



## Meet the barramundi of the Gladstone region

Barramundi (*Lates calcarifer*) or 'barra' are one of Australia's iconic fish, prized by fishers of all ages for their taste, size and fighting spirit when hooked.

They belong to the sea perch family and have a scooped (or concave) forehead, large jaw, and rounded tail fin. Barramundi have two dorsal (or back) fins, the first made of hard spines and the second of webbed rays.

They are found in fresh, brackish (a mix of salty and fresh), and salt water, often depending on how old they are. Where barramundi live even has an effect on the colour of their scales and fins! While they are mostly silver, their backs can vary from an olive-grey to grey-blue in colour, while their fins can vary from almost black to yellow.

The lifecycle of the barramundi is truly amazing! Most barramundi start life as males but become female at about 5 years of age, ready to release many millions of eggs during the next breeding season.

The size of a barramundi can be a good indicator of whether it is male or female. Barramundi 80 centimetres in length or smaller are generally males while larger fish are females.

In Australia, barramundi can grow as big as 1.5 metres long and weigh up to 60 kilograms living well into their 30s, but most are about 75 centimetres when they end up in your local fish and chip shop!



© Graham Cumming  
Courtesy of Dreamfish.com.au

## Not fussy with food

Barramundi are opportunistic feeders and adults will eat almost anything found in the water – including other barramundi and young crocodiles!

The diet of barramundi is mostly fish, prawn, shrimp, crayfish, crabs, and aquatic insects.

## Population status

The local barramundi population is considered 'sustainable' by Queensland Fisheries, and is supported by a fish breeding program that releases between 200,000 and 500,000 baby barramundi (called fingerlings) into Lake Awoonga south of Gladstone each year! Lake Callemondah is also regularly stocked with barramundi.

Barramundi are regularly encountered in the Boyne, Fitzroy, and Calliope Rivers, as well as Gladstone Harbour, the Narrows, Hamilton Point, and Rodds Bay.

## Mundi movements

Although most barramundi will stay in the one river system, individual fish have been known to travel a long way during their lives - one Gladstone barramundi was recaptured in Townsville, 760 kilometres from where it was first caught, tagged and released!

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A barramundi in its natural habitat  
© Johnny Mitchell

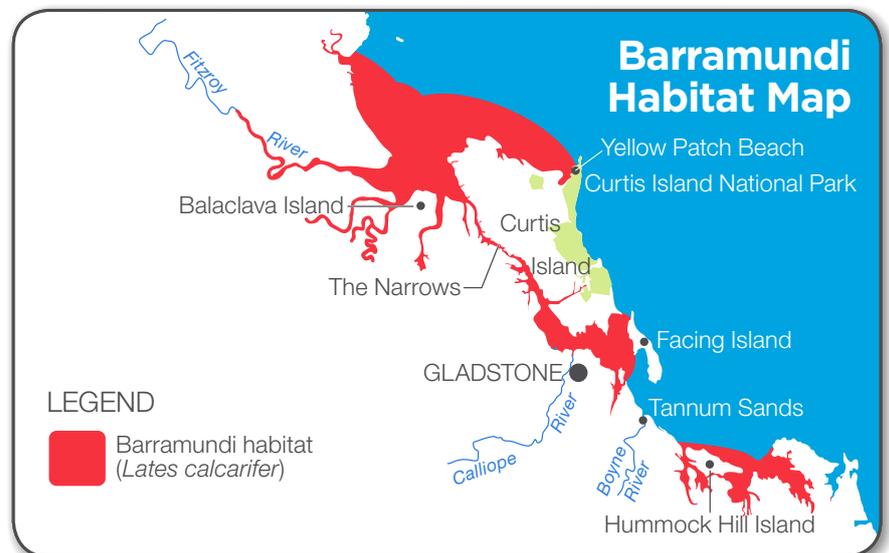
## Habitat

Many juvenile barramundi spend a few years in freshwater rivers and streams before they mature and move downstream to mangroves and river mouths as adults, although both adults and juveniles can be found in all habitats.

They love hiding under submerged logs and rock ledges in the water where they can dash out and grab their prey!

## Risks

- Barramundi is commercially and recreationally fished and balancing supply and demand is very important.
- Barramundi have a complex lifecycle which means that many habitats are important. Affecting the access to or degrading any of these habitats can affect the reproductive success or wellbeing of barramundi.
- Barra are very vulnerable to netting as they move in and out of small creeks and rivers. Fishing nets that are not looked after or disposed of properly can catch and kill lots of barramundi by accident.
- Pollution from humans can kill barramundi or make them too sick to breed.



Keep the Barra biting!

## Ways to look after us

- Handle fish that are going to be released gently to improve their chances of survival.
- Report illegal fishing to the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol.
- Remember that all drains lead to the ocean – always dispose of your rubbish in a bin and never pour chemicals down a drain!
- Follow the rules:
  - Barramundi have a minimum size limit of 58 centimetres and maximum size limit of 120 centimetres.
  - There is a bag limit of 5 fish in possession.
  - There is a closed season from 1 November to 1 February each year to allow fish to spawn.
- Get involved with the [barramundi monitoring program](#) by clicking the link or going to [www.daff.qld.gov.au](http://www.daff.qld.gov.au).



## Find out more

The Queensland Fisheries website has more information about **when and where** you can fish for barramundi.

Queensland Fisheries  
[www.daff.qld.gov.au/fisheries](http://www.daff.qld.gov.au/fisheries)



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