

Nature Notes

Junior Ranger



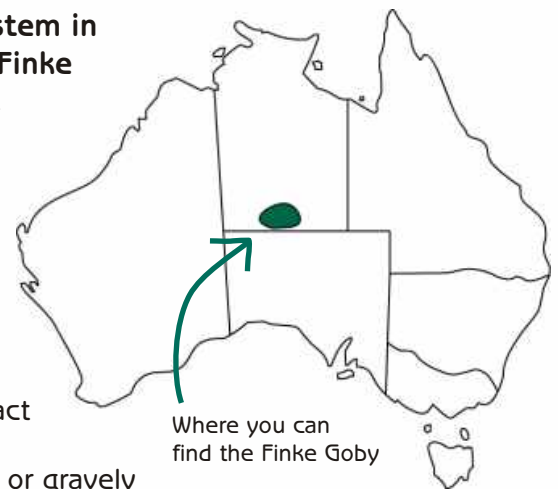
FINKE GOBY

Finke Goby are only found in the Finke River system in the southern part of the Northern Territory. The Finke River is very old and mostly dry so any fish that choose to live there must be pretty amazing!

FISH IN THE FINKE?

This river is one of the few in Central Australia that has permanent waterholes, which are important for the survival of native fish. Luckily, Finke Goby can live in water that gets very hot and salty and are happy to live in shallow pools.

Strangely they don't have **swim bladders** (internal gas filled sacs that act like 'floaties' helping the fish to swim and float) like many other fish species. Therefore they spend most of their time resting on the sandy or gravelly river bed, hiding in mud or debris and coming out at night to feed.

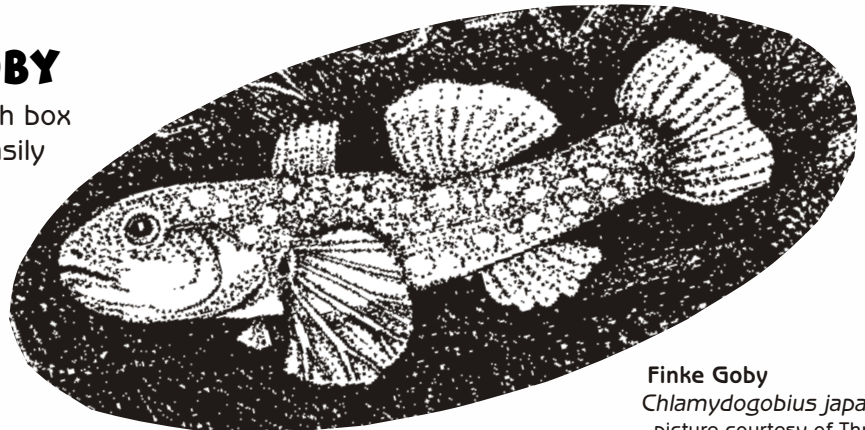


Where you can find the Finke Goby

GETTING TO KNOW A GOBY

This little fish is about as long as a match box (5cm) and greyish in colour, so it can easily camouflage itself on the riverbed. If you look closely you may see a very bright blue patch on the front fin of the male goby. Scientists think this may be used to attract a girlfriend.

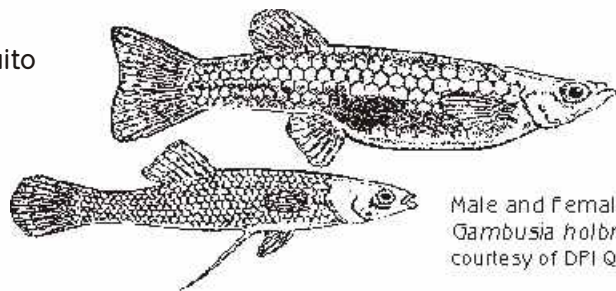
Insects, small crustaceans and algae are all on the menu for a goby.



Finke Goby
Chlamydogobius japalpa
- picture courtesy of Threatened Species Network.

MOSQUITO VS GOBY

The biggest threat to the Finke Goby is not a mosquito (whose larvae a goby would quickly gobble up) but introduced non-native fish species such as the Mosquito Fish! This very aggressive fish eats the eggs of our native fish. It is already known to have played a part in the decrease in numbers of two other goby species in Central Australia. Unfortunately, the Mosquito Fish is spreading quickly through freshwater habitats in Central Australia. It has been found in Alice Springs but at this stage it has not spread to the Finke River system.



Male and Female **Mosquito Fish**
Gambusia holbrooki - picture courtesy of DPI Queensland.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO DESERT WETLANDS?

Freshwater ecosystems in Australian Deserts are not as damaged as others, but they are under threat from feral animals and stock like cattle, horses and camels. Some weeds like the Athel Pine grow thick along rivers and around waterholes, pushing out native plants and changing the natural habitat our native species need. Building dams on rivers, pollution or pumping out water for human use can also cause problems for Desert Wetlands.

HOW CAN I HELP PROTECT THE GOBY

The best way to help native fish like the Finke Goby is to be careful when you visit desert waterholes and rivers. Guess how Mosquito Fish got here? Probably from someone's aquarium! If you have fish or snails in your aquarium at home, never let them go into rivers or waterways. Many of these introduced species can survive in the wild and you never know where they'll end up, or what harm they may cause.

What else? In dry times, when the Finke River isn't flowing the habitat of the Finke Goby is restricted to a handful of water holes or **refuges**. These are also the places that people like to go camping. Avoid swimming in small waterholes. Stirring up the water and letting sunscreen wash off can affect fish, frogs and insect larvae. And most importantly, remember to avoid using soaps and detergents in or near waterways.



There are two other species of fish that are only found in the Finke River.

The 1▲ 4▲ 4★ 1★ 5●

3★ 5★ 2▲ 1◆ 3■ 4★ 4● 1●

Use this grid to decode their names.

	1	2	3	4	5
●	A	B	C	D	E
▲	F	G	H	I	J
★	K	L	M	N	O
■	P	Q	R	S	T
◆	U	V	W	X	Y

And the 1▲ 4▲ 4★ 1★ 5●

3▲ 1● 3■ 4● 5◆ 3▲ 5● 1● 4●

Want to learn more about the Finke Goby?
 Check out the book *Field Guide to the Freshwater Fishes of Australia* by G.R. Allen, S.H. Midgley & M. Allen.

