

NATIVE FRESHWATER FISH

On 1 March 2017, New Zealand issued a colorful set of five stamps (Sc#2710–14) and a souvenir sheet depicting endemic freshwater fish. A limited edition imperforate SS/5 (2,000 numbered copies) was also produced.



Native Freshwater Fish
New Zealand, 2017, Sc#2714a

About three-quarters of the 40 freshwater fish species found in New Zealand are currently under threat due to destruction of habitat, migration barriers, and the introduction of predatory species such as trout.

The \$1 stamp shows a Lowland Longjaw Galaxias (*Galaxias cobitinis*). This fish is named after its distinctive upturned lower jaw and found in only a few inland streams and the Kauru and Kakanui Rivers. Fewer than 250 mature adults are believed to exist. Its elongated shape enables the fish to burrow into the gravel to lay eggs, feed, and to survive during flooding or low flows.

The \$1.80 stamp shows a Redfin Bully (*Gobiomorphus huttoni*). The male of this distinctive red-marked fish guards the female's eggs until they hatch. The larvae of the species wash out to sea and return to fresh water as juveniles. They tend to live close to the coast in stony streams and these acrobatic climbers can be found above waterfalls.

A Longfin Eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachii*) is depicted on the \$2.20 stamp. This fish is found only in New Zealand and with a life span of up to 100 years, it can grow up to two meters in length, but has been a victim of over-fishing.

The \$2.70 stamp has a generic Lamprey. The lamprey is a primitive jawless fish that is often mistaken for an eel. Adults spend most of their life at sea as parasites on other fish, returning to fresh water to breed.

A Torrentfish (*Cheimarrichthys fosteri*) is shown on the \$3.30 stamp. This fish is a species endemic to New Zealand that prefers fast-flowing water and can anchor itself to the riverbed with its pectoral fins to prevent being washed away.

Each of the species also appears in the margin of the SS/5.

The designer was Stephen Fuller of Wellington, New Zealand. The stamps were printed using offset lithography by Southern Colour Print.