

Round Goby

Neogobius melanostomus

Iowa Aquatic Invasive Species Fact Sheet

Description: The round goby has a body that is mostly slated gray, mottled with black and brown spots. It has thick lips and frog-like raised eyes. One of the most noted features is that it has only single scallop-shaped pelvic fin. The round goby is usually 3-6 inches long but may reach up to 10 inches long.



Distribution: The round goby has not yet been found in Iowa waters, but this fish is becoming increasingly common in the Great Lakes. This species is native to the Black and Caspian Seas and in all likelihood entered the United States from the discharge of ballast water released from transoceanic vessels. The goby has the potential to enter the Mississippi River through the Chicago Ship and Sanitary Canal and down the Illinois River.

Threats: Impacts of a goby invasion in Iowa are uncertain however, in areas where the goby has been established they have had a severely negative impact on native fish populations. Populations of mottled sculpins are already dwindling and may be driven into extinction from round goby competition. Other species may be affected include logperch and lake sturgeon – a species that is already endangered in Iowa. If round gobies colonize the Mississippi River, there is concern over the impacts they may have on darters, several of which are listed on the Federal Threatened and Endangered Species List.

Control: Preventing the spread of the round goby is vital. Anglers, commercial fisherman, and fishery professionals should know how to identify the round goby. Often, anglers are the first to discover the round goby because hook and line commonly catch these aggressive fish. Your help is vital to report new sightings and to prevent their spread.

Law: Iowa law makes it illegal to 1) possess, introduce, purchase, sell, propagate, or transport aquatic invasive species in Iowa, 2) place a trailer or launch a watercraft with aquatic invasive species attached in public waters, and 3) operate a watercraft in a marked aquatic invasive species infestation. The scheduled fine is \$500 for violating any of the above regulations. The law also requires the DNR to identify waterbodies infested with aquatic invasive species and post signs alerting boaters. The DNR may restrict boating, fishing, swimming, and trapping in infested waters.

