

Ruffe

Gymnocephalus cernuus

Iowa Aquatic Invasive Species Fact Sheet

Description: The ruffe rarely grows bigger than 5 inches. Its fins and gills are covered by sharp spines that may discourage any would-be predators. The mouth is small and down turned and the has glassy eyes.



Distribution: The ruffe is a small member of the perch family that is native to central and Eastern Europe. It was introduced to Minnesota, probably in tanker ballast water, around 1985, and is spreading to other rivers and bays around Lake Superior. The ruffe has not been found in Iowa to date.

Threats: Ruffe grow rapidly and can reproduce in their first year. In infested areas, the ruffe has caused a serious impact on population of yellow perch, emerald shiners, and other forage fish. The ruffe's ability to displace other species in newly invaded areas is due to its high reproductive rate; its feeding efficiency, and spiny characteristics.

Control: To help control the spread and introduction of ruffe, become more informed about the spread of non-native species nationwide. Consult your local, state, and federal conservation authorities as to the threat of non-native species in your area, and to the laws and regulations governing the importation, culture, maintenance, and stocking of non-native species. Utilize care in the purchase and use of baitfish in lakes and streams. Ask your bait dealers where their baitfish originates from, and never release any unused baitfish into water; always destroy them or return them to your bait dealer. Support your local, state and federal natural resources agencies in all of their efforts to stop the spread of non-native species of any kind.

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.

