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The Whitefin gudgeon *Romanogobio belingi* new for The Netherlands

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With 2 figures

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The whitefin gudgeon *Romanogobia belingi* (Lukasch, 1933) is recorded for the first time from The Netherlands

1 Introduction

In the past years the fish fauna of the Dutch rivers belonging to the River Rhine system has been altered significantly. Species introduced to the Rhine system, such as Vimba (*Vimba vimba*), Asp (*Aspius aspius*) and Danube bream (*Abramis sapa*) are nowadays found in the Dutch waters (De Nie, 1996; Freyhof, *et al.*, 2000; Van Emmerik, 2003). One Danubian species, the Tubenose goby (*Proterorhinus marmoratus*), invaded the River Rhine system via the Main-Danube-Canal and made it up to the Netherlands (Winter, 2002). Several other species of gobies are thought to follow (Freyhof, 2003).

Already in 1998, Freyhof reported on another species in the River Rhine, which could be expected to occur in the Netherlands. This species, the Whitefin gudgeon (*Romanogobio belingi* (Lukasch, 1933)), was found to be common and widespread in German parts of the River Rhine. Although attention to the possible occurrence of this species in the Netherlands had been given (Anonymous, 2001), no records of this species were known until 2004. This is especially remarkable as this species is actually quite likely to be a native species (Freyhof *et al.*, 2000).

2 The record (Fig. 1, 2)

On June 12, 2004 a adult Whitefin Gudgeon was caught by P. Spaans in the River Waal near Ochten. The River Waal is part of the River Rhine System. It was caught with a ledger rod in relatively fast flowing water close to the main current.

Identification as a Whitefin Gudgeon was based on the following characters (Balon *et al.*, 1988; Freyhof, 1998):

1. The body was rather slim and the tail was laterally less compressed, in comparison to the Gudgeon (*Gobio gobio*).
2. The pigment spots in the dorsal and tail fin were inconspicuous. These spots are usually prominent in the Gudgeon.
3. The barbels were long, almost reaching the posterior edge of the eyes. In the Gudgeon the barbels reach only halfway the eyes.
4. The anus was situated somewhat closer to the base of the pelvic fins than to the anal fins. In the Gudgeon the anus is situated in the middle of the pelvic and the anal fins.

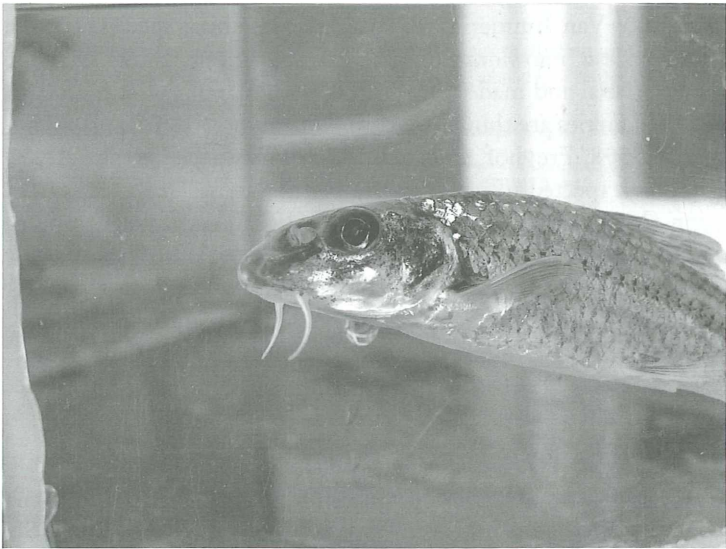
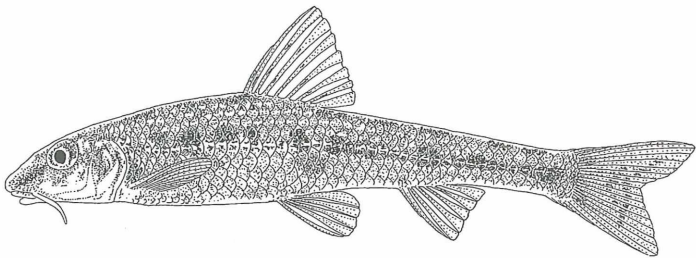


Fig. 1: *Romanogobio belingi*, original drawing after the specimen from Ochten, The Netherlands by P. Veenliet
Fig. 2: *Romanogobio belingi*, photo taken from the specimen from Ochten, The Netherlands

3 Discussion

Why has it taken as much as six years since the paper by Freyhof (1998) for the first record of the Whitefin gudgeon to be established for the Netherlands. In the past, relatively little attention has been paid to the smaller fish species, but this has changed in more recent years. The most likely explanation is the absence of clear descriptions of the species in the more easily accessible literature. Especially the character of the spots in the dorsal and tail fin is likely to have caused confusion. Although the spots are inconspicuous, they are clearly visible when the fins are examined closely. This misinterpretation of spots may have led to assigning actual Whitefin gudgeons to the closely related Gudgeon. In addition, the common gudgeon is a rather variable species which adapts its colour to the background. Because of this some Gudgeons appear to have a tail-fin pattern that is similar to that of the Whitefin gudgeon (Balon *et al.*, 1988). A wider use of characters such as listed above might help to improve proper identification of the species and will hopefully lead to better understanding of the occurrence of the Whitefin gudgeon in the Netherlands.

Further confusion could arise from the fact that both genus and species name of the Whitefin gudgeon has been altered. Until recently the species was known as *Gobio albipinnatus* (e.g. Freyhof, 1998; Freyhof *et al.*, 2000; Anonymous, 2001). As a result of a revision and changing taxonomic views, this name was changed to *Romanogobio belingi* (Naseka, 2001; Naseka & Freyhof, 2004).

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