

# Ruffe

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## Species Description

**Scientific name:** *Gymnocephalus cernuus*

**AKA:** Eurasian ruffe, pope, river ruffe, tommy ruffe, stone-perch

**Native to:** Europe; excluding Scotland and Ireland

**Habitat:** Prefer slow moving rivers, also found in lakes and ponds.

Ruffe are a small, bottom dwelling fish. They have an oval body in cross-section and typically are less than 20 cm in length. Body is olive-brown to golden-brown on its back and yellowish-white undersides, with speckled dark spots. They have glassy eyes. The mouth is slightly down-turned. The dorsal fins are fused with 12-19 spines followed by 11-16 soft rays. They also have spines on anal, pelvic and gill cover.

They are omnivorous, feeding on invertebrates, fish eggs, plants and seeds. Well adapted to feeding in low-light or high-turbidly conditions and subsequently good at avoiding predation. They have a high reproductive capacity, spawning multiple times and reach sexual maturity quickly (sometimes within 1 year).

Ruffe are not present in Northern Ireland but are present Britain. Illegal introductions and releases from the use of angling bait are the most likely pathway for introductions into Northern Ireland.

In areas where they are established populations can out-compete native fish for food and habitat.

**As ruffe is not ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland, under The Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order (Northern Ireland) 2019, it is an offence to release or allow this species to escape into the wild.**

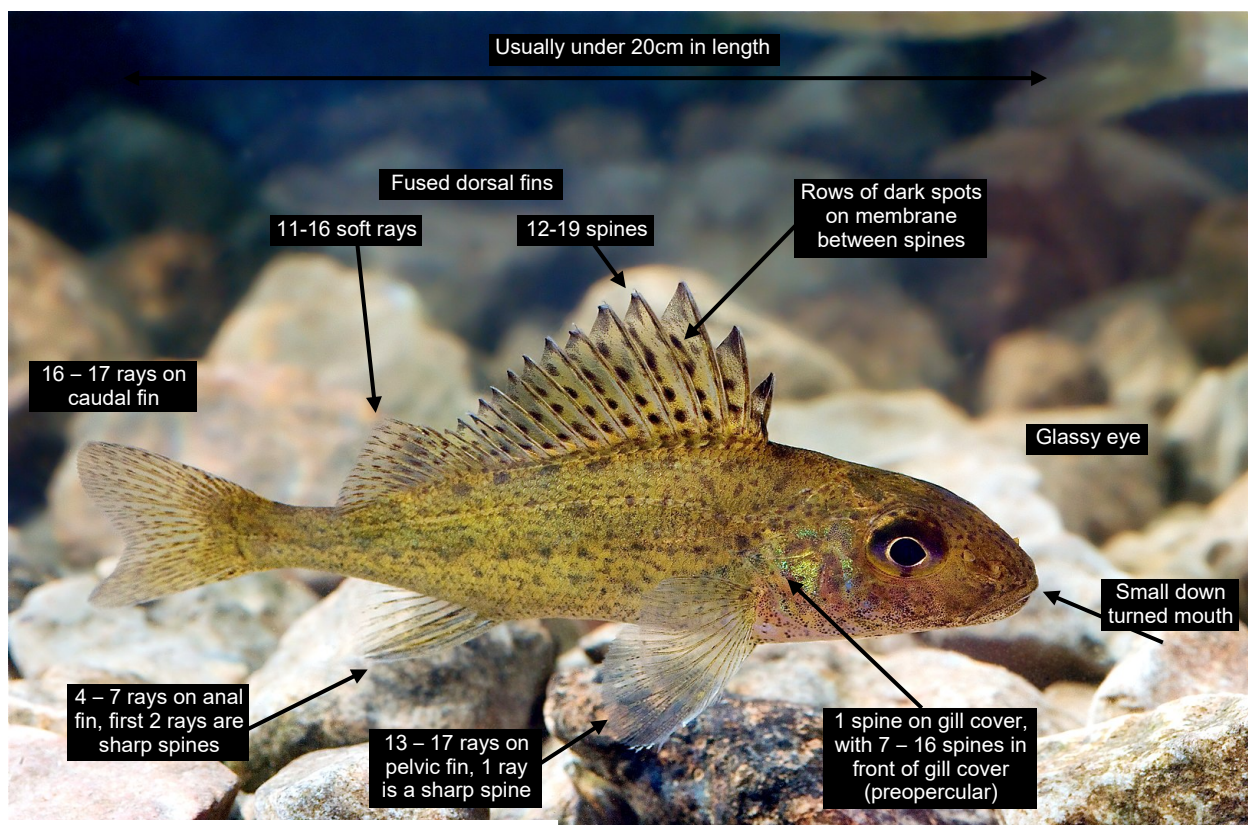


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## Key ID Features



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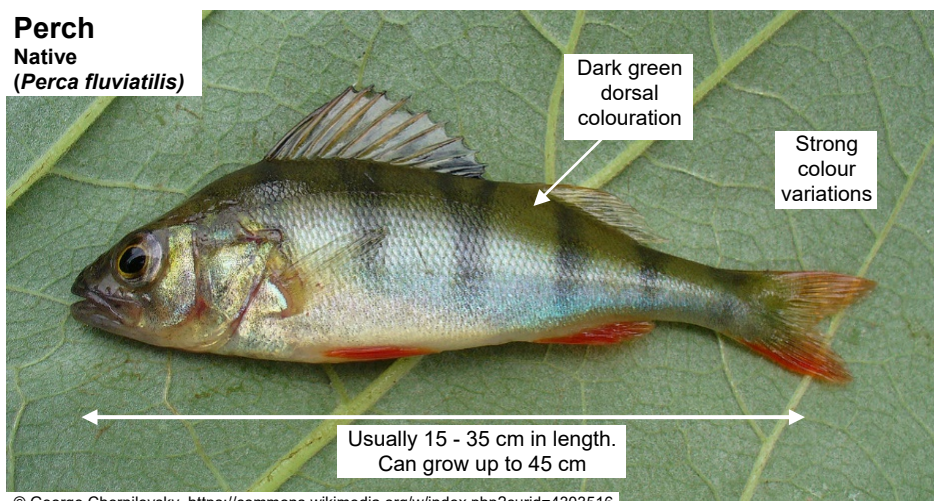
Report any sightings via; CEDaR Online Recording - <https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI>, iRecord app or Invasive Species Northern Ireland website - <http://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/report-sighting>



# Similar Species

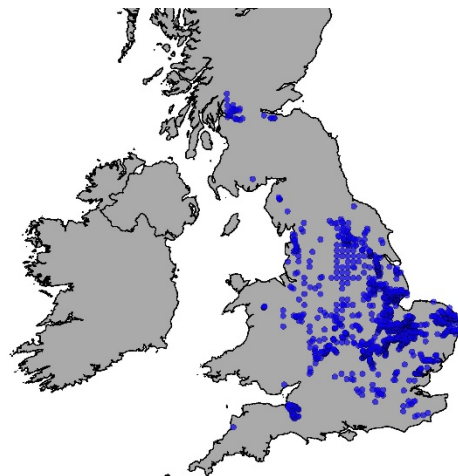
The most likely species to be confused with ruffe in Northern Ireland is perch, no other species has a prominent dorsal fin with spines. Perch is of similar size but does not have fused dorsal fins.

## Perch Native (*Perca fluviatilis*)

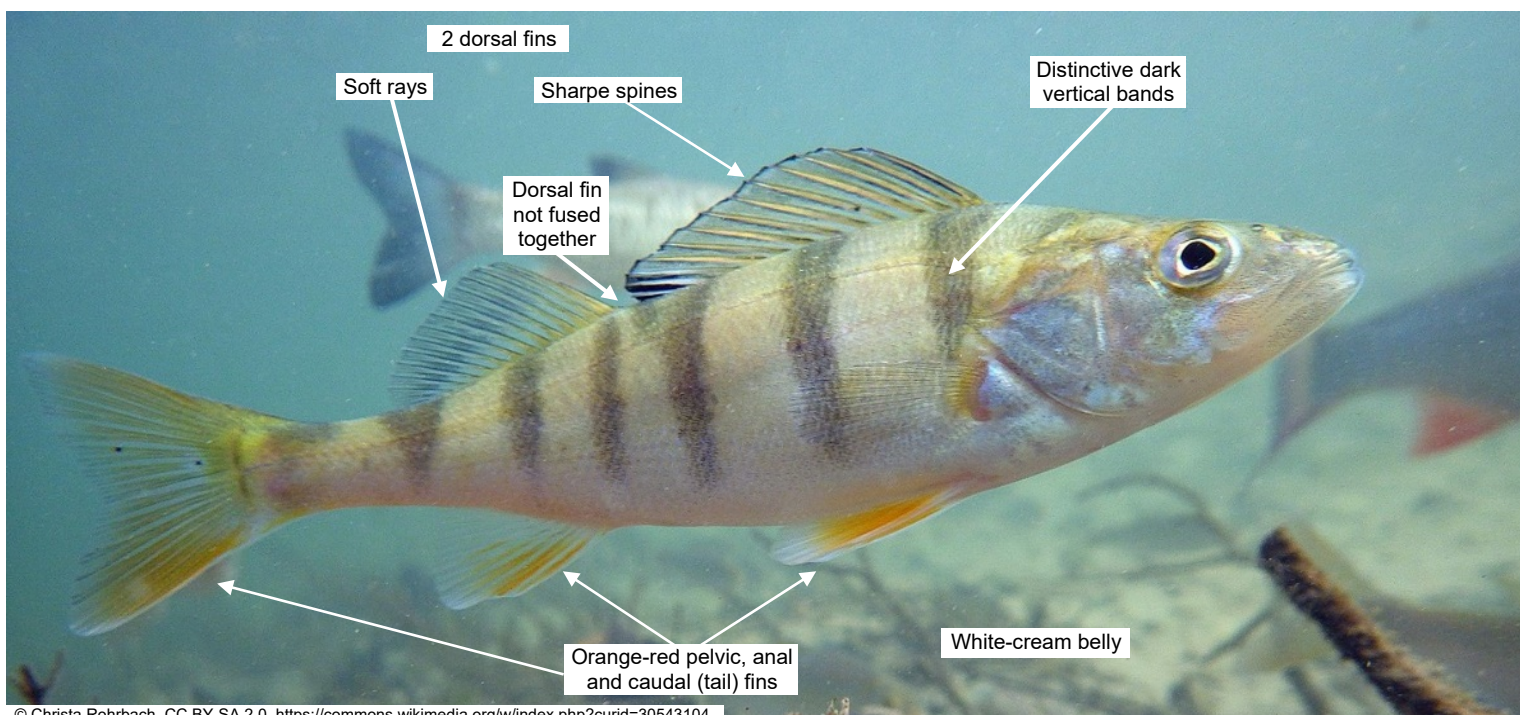


# Distribution

Native and widespread in England



Source NBN atlas – available at  
<https://species.nbnatlas.org/species/NHMSYS0000544680>  
check website for current distribution



## References and further reading:

CADI *Gymnocephalus cernuus* (ruffe) data sheet -  
<https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/80729>

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