### Species

**Anabas testudineus** (Bloch, 1795)

### Common Name

Climbing perch; climbing gouramy

### Order: Family

Perciformes: Anabantidae

### Impact summary

Very hardy, highly invasive species; may out-compete native species for space and food. They can alter water quality through disturbing sediments and increasing nutrient levels. Burrow into sediments and can survive there for up to 6 months even when the water dries up. Spines on gill covers and fins can injure and even lodging in the throat of predators such as fish, crocodiles, snakes and birds when they attempt to eat the fish, resulting in starvation.

### Appearance & Size

Slender body with large scales; dark to pale green to brown; top area dusky to olive; bottom of head with stripes; reddish-gold; gill cover margins strongly spined; juveniles have a dark spot on rear of gill and at base of tail fin; maximum size 25cm.

### Native Range

Tropical-subtropical 28°N-10°S; Indian subcontinent through South East Asia to Indonesia and China.

### Habitat

Occurs in fresh and brackish (slightly salty) water; prefers slow or still waters and found in a range of water bodies including rivers, lakes, swamps, marshes and estuaries. Can tolerate muddy or stagnant waters; remains buried in mud during dry season and then reemerges when water returns. Will ‘walk’ overland using gill cover spines, pelvic fins and tail, thus moving to new waterbodies, especially during the wet season. It can breath directly from the air with a special respiratory organ, the labyrinth, located above the gills, and can survive prolonged exposure out of water if kept moist.

### Feeding

Omnivore: mainly feeds on aquatic plants, detritus, but also eats crustaceans (shrimps), snails, worms, insects and small fish.

### Human Use

Used in aquaculture and commercial fisheries in native range.

### Introduction History in Papua New Guinea

First reported from PNG in 1976 from the Morehead River near the Irian Jaya border. Polon (1994) reported large numbers of the species from swamps and creeks along the entire coast of the Western Province from the Irian Jaya border to the mouth of the Fly River. Lawrence (1995) reported the species in coastal waters at Kadawa, a PNG village near Daru and north-east of Saibai Island. Hitchcock (2006) made the first report of the species in Australian waters from Saibai Island located 4km from the PNG coast.

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**Image:** 1. Kim, T.H. in Lim and Ng (2008)  
2. QDPI, Brisbane, Qld. (line drawing)