

SPECIES INFORMATION SHEET

Cottus gobio

English name: Bullhead	Scientific name: <i>Cottus gobio</i>	
Taxonomical group: Class: Actinopterygii Order: Scorpaeniformes Family: Cottidae	Species authority: Linnaeus, 1758	
Subspecies, Variations, Synonyms: –	Generation length: 3.8 years	
Past and current threats (Habitats Directive article 17 codes): –	Future threats (Habitats Directive article 17 codes): –	
IUCN Criteria: –	HELCOM Red List Category:	LC Least Concern
Global / European IUCN Red List Category LC/LC	Habitats Directive: Annex II (except the Finnish populations)	
Previous HELCOM Red List Category (2007): VU		
Protection and Red List status in HELCOM countries: Denmark –/RE, Estonia Protected by the law (III category) / LC, Finland –/LC, Germany Protected by national and European law / * (Not threatened, freshwaters), Latvia –/–, Lithuania –/–, Poland Prohibited to kill, catch or disturb this species under strictly protection / DD, Russia Included in the Red Book of Russia as decreasing species (illegal to fish for and land this species) / EN, Sweden –/LC		

Distribution and status in the Baltic Sea region

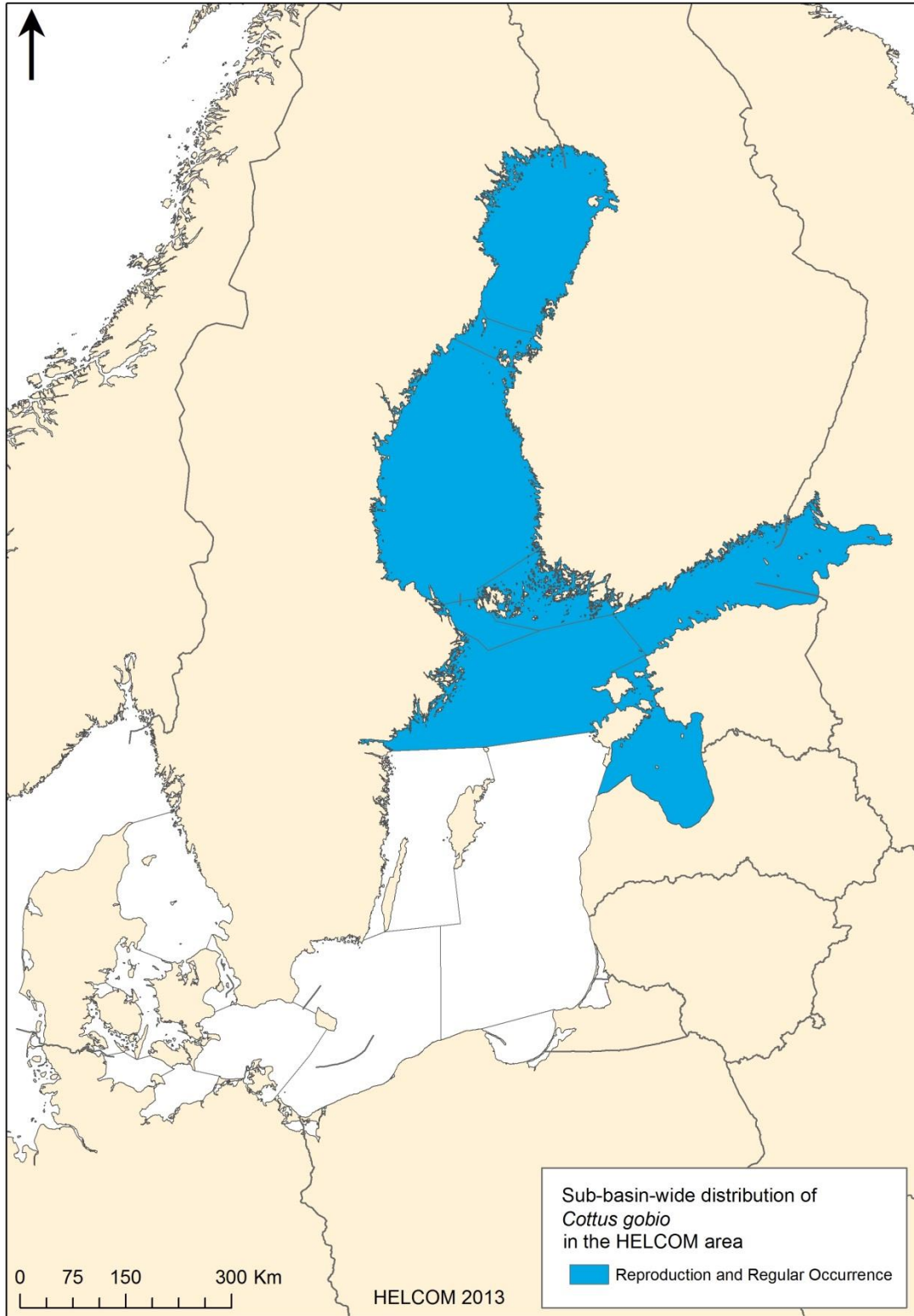
In the Baltic Sea, the main distribution of this freshwater species is in the north, in the Gulf of Bothnia and the Gulf of Finland. It occurs also in some Estonian sea areas, in the Gulf of Riga, and in the Vistula lagoon. The bullhead has decreased in very eutrophicated areas in Finland, but no quantitative data are available from the Baltic Sea since the species is not caught in coastal monitory fishing or by regular fishery.



Bullhead. Photo by Essi Keskinen, Metsähallitus NHS.

Distribution map

The map shows the sub-basins in the HELCOM area where the species is known to occur regularly and to reproduce (HELCOM 2012).



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Habitat and ecology

This species inhabits clean and well-oxygenated gravel and rock bottoms in streams, rivers and lakes, in estuaries and in shallow brackish waters of the Baltic Sea. It feeds on small benthic invertebrates, like insects and crustaceans. The species is most active at night and in daytime it can be found resting underneath stones. The eggs are also attached in clumps underneath stones and guarded there by the parent. No long migrations are known. The maximum total length is 18 cm but the species is usually smaller, and the maximum individual age is 5 years. (Froese & Pauly 2005, Freyhof & Kottelat 2005)

Description of major threats

The bullhead is mainly threatened by eutrophication, as the species needs clean and oxygenated water, especially for spawning, embryonic development, and larval habitats. It cannot live in eutrophicated areas where the stones of rocky bottoms are covered by filamentous algae.

Assessment justification

The bullhead has decreased in very eutrophicated areas in Finland, but there are no quantitative data available from the Baltic Sea since the species is not caught in coastal monitory fishing or by regular fishery. Electrofishing in Swedish rivers however shows increasing trend over the last 20 years and no significant trend over the last 15 and 10 years (Degerman et al. 2009). The decrease in the whole HELCOM area based on the available information is estimated to be less than the 15% population decline that is the threshold for Near Threatened according to the A criterion. The distribution area and population size are also well above the limits for being classified as threatened and hence this species is classified as Least Concern in the HELCOM area.

Recommendations for actions to conserve the species

No protection actions currently needed in HELCOM area but methods should be developed to collect information on the species occurrence and abundance. Furthermore populations of this species would benefit from reduced eutrophication.

Common names

D - Groppe; GB – Bullhead; EST - võldas; DK - Hvidfinnet ferskvandsulk; FIN – kivisimppu; LV - Platgalve; LT - Paprastasis kūjagalvis; PL - Głowacz białopłetwy; RUS - Европейский реčnoj бычок; S – Stensimpa

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