

SPECIES INFORMATION SHEET

Pelecus cultratus

English name: Razor-fish/Sichel	Scientific name: <i>Pelecus cultratus</i>	
Taxonomical group: Class: Actinopterygii Order: Cypriniformes Family: Cyprinidae	Species authority: Linnaeus, 1758	
Subspecies, Variations, Synonyms: In recent years this taxa has been placed in the Leuciscinae or the Cultrinae. Kottelat and Freyhoff (2007) tentatively place it in Leuciscinae.	Generation length: 5.5 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	
Previous HELCOM Red List Category (2007): VU		
Protection and Red List status in HELCOM countries: Denmark –/CR, Estonia –/–, Finland –/DD, Germany –/R (Extremely rare, Baltic Sea), Latvia <i>No protection measures apart from minimum landing size of 32 cm</i> / RA, Lithuania –/–, Poland <i>Under strictly protection, catching, killing or disturbing the species is prohibited, in exception of Vistula Lagoon where population is strong and stable</i> / NT, Russia –/–, Sweden <i>Prohibited to fish for and land this species all year round</i> / NA		

Distribution and status in the Baltic Sea region

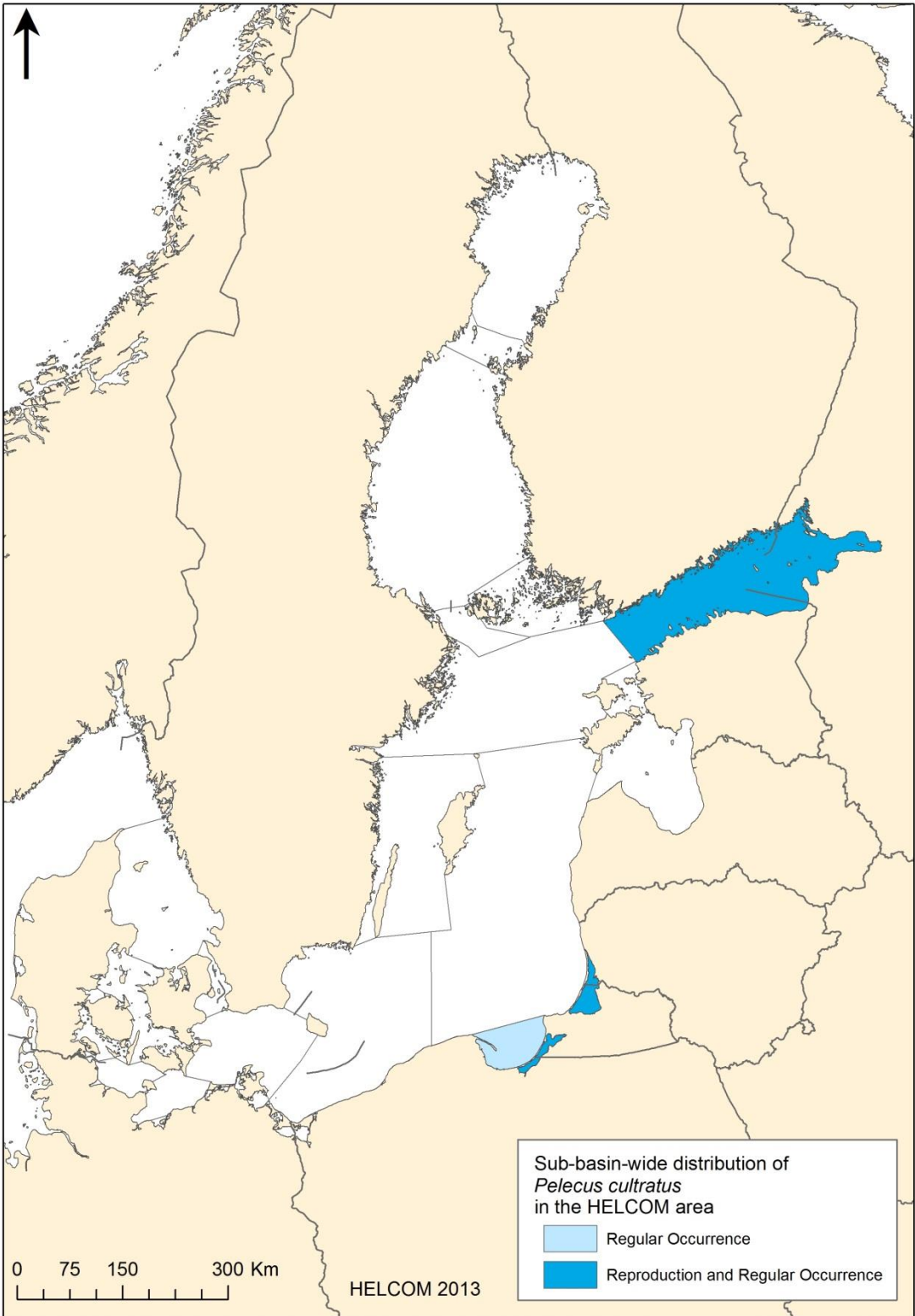
The razor-fish is mainly distributed in freshwaters from Vistula to Neva drainages, including lakes Ladoga and Onega. It is also abundant in the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland. Occasionally it is found at the coast west of Vistula and on the coasts of Latvia, Estonia, southern Sweden and Finland. It is common bycatch in the fykenet fishery in the Polish part of the Vistula lagoon. Data from commercial landings in Vistula lagoon show a decrease in mid 1900s but an increase during last decades. More recent investigation (2004–2010) of fishing and fishing effort shows that the species seems to be stable. Razor-fish is considered extremely rare in Germany with a stable but low population size. Razor-fish has recently become more abundant in Finland and Latvia. The species is abundant in the Curonian Lagoon where commercial landings at the Russian side of the Lagoon were approx. 325 tonnes plus 4 tonnes on the Lithuanian side in 2011. There are no signs of species decline in this area and the total catches in the Curonian Lagoon have increased during the last 20 years.



Razor-fish. Photo by Lauri Urho, Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute.

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

The razor fish is a euryhaline pelagic fish which inhabits open water surfaces of large rivers and large lakes and lagoons. Anadromous individuals forage and spawn in pelagic freshened parts of sea or lower parts of rivers, in main channel or floodplains. A non-migratory form exists in the Curonian and Vistula lagoons. The species lives up to nine years, although Gaigalas (2001) reported a 13 years old female. First spawning takes place at 3–5 years.

Description of major threats

Fishing could become a major threat to this species.

Assessment justification

Available data show that population size is stable or increasing and there is no decline in area of occupancy. Furthermore total population size is above the limits of the IUCN criteria for a small (< 20 000 individuals) population. Although both extent of occurrence and area of occupancy are below the limit for NT in a restricted population (< 5 000 and < 500 km² respectively) the razor-fish does not fulfil the additional sub criteria of either being severely fragmented, experiencing a continuous decline in population size or habitat, or extreme fluctuations in population size or habitat. Hence this species is classified as LC in the HELCOM area according to the IUCN system.

Recommendations for actions to conserve the species

No protection actions currently needed in HELCOM area but information on the size of the populations should be collected.

Common names

D - Ziege; GB – Razorfish/Sichel; EST - Nugakala; DK - Sabelkarpe; FIN - Miekkasärki; LV - Kaze; LT - Ožka; PL - Ciosa; RUS - Chekhon; S - Skärkniv

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