

Oreochromis mossambicus  

System: Freshwater



Kingdom	Phylum	Class	Order	Family
Animalia	Chordata	Actinopterygii	Perciformes	Cichlidae

Common name Mozambikskaya tilapiya (Russian, Russian Federation), nkobue (Sena, Mozambique), mojarra (Spanish, Mexico), tilapia mozámica (Spanish, Mexico), tilapia del Mozambique (Spanish), Mozambique mouth-breeder (English), Mozambique mouthbrooder (English), Mozambique tilapia (English), tilapia mossambica (English, Dominican Republic), kawasuzume (Japanese), blou kurper (Afrikaans, South Africa), fai chau chak ue (Cantonese, Hong Kong), tilapia (English, Bangladesh), common tilapia (English, Fiji), Java tilapia (English, Fiji), kurper bream (English, Hong Kong), Mozambique cichlid (English, India), malea (Fijian), tilapia du Mozambique (French), mujair (Javanese, Indonesia), trey tilapia khmao (Khmer, Cambodia), wu-kuo yu (Mandarin, Taiwan), mphende (Nyanja, Malawi), weißkehlbarsch (German), mosambik-maulbrüter (German)

Synonym *Tilapia mossambica* , (Peters, 1852)
Sarotherodon mossambicus , (Peters, 1852)
Chromis dumerilii , Steindachner, 1864
Chromis vorax , Pfeffer, 1893
Chromis natalensis , Weber, 1897
Tilapia arnoldi , Gilchrist & Thompson, 1917

Similar species *Oreochromis*

Summary *Oreochromis mossambicus* (Mozambique tilapia) has spread worldwide through introductions for aquaculture. Established populations of *Oreochromis mossambicus* in the wild are as a result of intentional release or escapes from fish farms. *Oreochromis mossambicus* is omnivorous and feeds on almost anything, from algae to insects.



[view this species on IUCN Red List](#)

Species Description

28-31 vertebrae; dorsal spines XV-XVII; total dorsal rays 26-29; 30-32 lateral line scales; anal spines III, lower outer gill rakers 14-20; fine pharyngeal teeth; breeding males black (not in some cultured strains) with white lower parts on head; red dorsal and caudal fin margins; remnants of striped and barred pattern often visible in females, juveniles and non-breeding males, as a series of mid-lateral and dorsal blotches; jaws of adult males greatly enlarged, concave dorsal head profile; male genital papilla simple or slightly notched; caudal fin not densely scaled.

Notes

Mozambique tilapia (*Oreochromis mossambicus*) are easy to keep and breed in captivity.

The so-called red tilapia in aquaculture is a hybrid between *O. mossambicus* and either *O. niloticus* or *O. hornorum*. *O. mossambicus* is the research subject of many physiological and biochemical studies in Asia. The mouthbrooding habit of this species allows it to nurture and carry its young long distances to invade habitats far from the original site of introduction (Costa-Pierce, 2003).

Outside of Asia exotic tilapia fishes were not imported directly from Africa, but arrived as transits from third or fourth party sources. Founder populations may be morphologically and meristically distinct in Africa but are still reproductively compatible due to their recent divergence (Costa-Pierce, 2003).

Lifecycle Stages

Size and age of sexual maturity varies according to environmental conditions, with spawning in ponds at 2-3 months and 6-10cm for females and 7-13cm for males at intervals of 1- 5 months. In natural conditions sexual maturity at greater age and size.

Habitat Description

Many tilapias (*Oreochromis spp.*) can live quite happily in seawater. The fact that they have not typically invaded coral reefs is perhaps due to predation by marine fishes. (Courtenay, W., pers. comm., 2004).

Mozambique tilapia (*Oreochromis mossambicus*) is very hardy and tolerates the high salinities of atoll lagoons, such as that at Fanning Atoll (Lobel, 1980). Thought to be ideal pond fish, they readily produce stunted stocks when overcrowded, as has been observed on Pagan in the Northern Mariana Islands (Eldredge, 2000).

Reproduction

Egg-layer. Male builds spawning bowers. Up to 1775 ripe eggs in one female. Hatching after 3-5 days; fry released 10-14 days after spawning, but mouthbrooded for about another week; more than one brood per season.

Reproductive performance of tilapias is affected by salinity, which suppresses the aggression of dominant males. *O. mossambicus* can reproduce at 35 and 49 ppt (Bhujel, 2000).

Nutrition

Mozambique tilapia (*Oreochromis mossambicus*) are opportunistic feeders; juveniles are mainly omnivorous, while adults mainly feed on detritus.

General Impacts

When introduced, Mozambique tilapia (*Oreochromis mossambicus*) may be a possible threat to native species through competition for food and nest space. Juveniles have been documented to feed on other fish (de Moor *et al.* 1986). Tilapia are now generally considered to be pests. Eradication has been suggested on Tarawa and Nauru (Eldredge, 2000).

In Hawai'i, this species is suspected to be a threat to native species such as striped mullet (*Mugil cephalus*) (Randall 1987; Devick 1991). Tilapia also have been considered a major factor in the decline of the desert pupfish (*Cyprinodon macularius*) in the Salton Sea area (Courtenay and Robins, 1989; Swift *et al.* 1993). Because of its presence in Dade County, Florida, Courtenay (1989) indicated that the Mozambique tilapia may eventually enter Everglades National Park.

Management Info

Mozambique tilapia (*Oreochromis mossambicus*) are hardy and can easily establish in natural waters near aquaculture ponds or cages, from which they may escape during loading-harvesting or *via* containment failures. Mozambique tilapia are particularly hardy, resistant to wide varieties of water salinity oxygen and pollution levels, and can migrate long distances. They are difficult to catch by angling. They occupy a wide range of habitats, and reproduce rapidly and successfully. Removal from natural water resources where they have established may be impossible. The most effective management is complete isolation of individuals from natural waters to prevent introductions. Established populations may require intensive fishing to prevent overpopulations from affecting native populations (Jeffrey McCrary pers.comm May 2005).

Preventative measures: The use of potentially invasive alien species for aquaculture and their accidental release/or escape can have negative impacts on native biodiversity and ecosystems. [Hewitt et al. \(2006\) Alien Species in Aquaculture: Considerations for responsible use](#) aims to first provide decision makers and managers with information on the existing international and regional regulations that address the use of alien species in aquaculture, either directly or indirectly; and three examples of national responses to this issue (Australia, New Zealand and Chile). The publication also provides recommendations for a 'simple' set of guidelines and principles for developing countries that can be applied at a regional or domestic level for the responsible management of Alien Species use in aquaculture development. These guidelines focus primarily on marine systems, however may equally be applied to freshwater.

[Copp et al. \(2005\) Risk identification and assessment of non-native freshwater fishes](#) presents a conceptual risk assessment approach for freshwater fish species that addresses the first two elements (hazard identification, hazard assessment) of the UK environmental risk strategy. The paper presents a few worked examples of assessments on species to facilitate discussion. The electronic [Decision-support tools- Invasive-species identification tool kits that includes a freshwater and marine fish invasives scoring kit](#) are made available on the Cefas (Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science) page for free download (subject to Crown Copyright (2007-2008)).

Pathway

Mozambique tilapia (*Oreochromis mossambicus*) have been introduced to many locations mainly for aquaculture. Mozambique tilapia has been directly introduced as a fishery resource by governmental agencies and individual anglers into natural waters th

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ALIEN RANGE

[1] ALGERIA
[1] ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
[44] AUSTRALIA
[1] BANGLADESH
[1] BENIN
[1] BRAZIL
[1] CAMBODIA
[1] COLOMBIA
[1] COOK ISLANDS
[1] CUBA

[1] AMERICAN SAMOA
[1] ARGENTINA
[3] BAHAMAS
[1] BARBADOS
[1] BOLIVIA
[1] BURUNDI
[1] CHINA
[1] CONGO
[1] COSTA RICA
[1] CZECH REPUBLIC

[1] DOMINICA	[1] DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
[1] ECUADOR	[1] EGYPT
[1] EL SALVADOR	[2] FIJI
[1] FRENCH POLYNESIA	[1] GRENADA
[1] GUADELOUPE	[1] GUAM
[1] GUATEMALA	[1] GUYANA
[1] HAITI	[1] HONDURAS
[1] HONG KONG	[4] INDIA
[3] INDONESIA	[1] ISRAEL
[1] JAMAICA	[1] JAPAN
[1] JORDAN	[1] KENYA
[2] KIRIBATI	[1] KOREA, REPUBLIC OF
[1] MADAGASCAR	[1] MALAYSIA
[1] MALDIVES	[1] MALTA
[1] MARTINIQUE	[3] MEXICO
[1] MICRONESIA, FEDERATED STATES OF	[1] NAMIBIA
[1] NAURU	[1] NEPAL
[1] NEW CALEDONIA	[2] NICARAGUA
[1] NIUE	[2] NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
[1] PAKISTAN	[1] PALAU
[1] PANAMA	[1] PAPUA NEW GUINEA
[1] PERU	[1] PHILIPPINES
[1] PUERTO RICO	[1] REUNION
[2] RUSSIAN FEDERATION	[1] SAINT LUCIA
[1] SAMOA	[1] SAUDI ARABIA
[1] SEYCHELLES	[1] SINGAPORE
[2] SOLOMON ISLANDS	[3] SOUTH AFRICA
[9] SRI LANKA	[1] SURINAME
[1] TAIWAN	[1] THAILAND
[1] TONGA	[1] TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
[1] TUNISIA	[1] TUVALU
[1] UGANDA	[1] UNITED KINGDOM
[41] UNITED STATES	[2] VANUATU
[2] VENEZUELA	[2] VIET NAM
[1] WALLIS AND FUTUNA	

Red List assessed species 21: CR = 2; EN = 9; VU = 7; LC = 3;

Barbus andrewi EN	Chirostoma bartoni VU
Crossocheilus periyarensis EN	Devario fraseri VU
Etroplus suratensis LC	Garra ghorensis CR
Garra menoni VU	Garra periyarensis VU
Horadandia atukorali LC	Hypselobarbus curmuca EN
Hypselobarbus periyarensis EN	Lepidopygopsis typus EN
Mesonoemacheilus pambarensis VU	Nemacheilus menoni VU
Nemacheilus periyarensis VU	Puntius chalakkudiensis EN
Rohtee ogilbii LC	Tilapia guinasana CR
Tor khudree EN	Travancoria elongata EN
Travancoria jonesi EN	

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Baird, R. 1976. Historical review of the SPC fisheries activities. South Pacific Commission, Noumea. 5 pp.

[Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science \(CEFAS\)., 2008. Decision support tools-Identifying potentially invasive non-native marine and freshwater species: fish, invertebrates, amphibians.](#)

Summary: The electronic tool kits made available on the Cefas page for free download are Crown Copyright (2007-2008). As such, these are freeware and may be freely distributed provided this notice is retained. No warranty, expressed or implied, is made and users should satisfy themselves as to the applicability of the results in any given circumstance. Toolkits available include 1) FISK- Freshwater Fish Invasiveness Scoring Kit (English and Spanish language version); 2) MFISK- Marine Fish Invasiveness Scoring Kit; 3) MI-ISK- Marine invertebrate Invasiveness Scoring Kit; 4) FI-ISK- Freshwater Invertebrate Invasiveness Scoring Kit and AmphISK- Amphibian Invasiveness Scoring Kit. These tool kits were developed by Cefas, with new VisualBasic and computational programming by Lorenzo Vilizzi, David Cooper, Andy South and Gordon H. Copp, based on VisualBasic code in the original Weed Risk Assessment (WRA) tool kit of P.C. Pheloung, P.A. Williams & S.R. Halloy (1999).

The decision support tools are available from:

<http://cefas.defra.gov.uk/our-science/ecosystems-and-biodiversity/non-native-species/decision-support-tools.aspx> [Accessed 13 October 2011]

[The guidance document](http://www.cefas.co.uk/media/118009/fisk_guide_v2.pdf) is available from http://www.cefas.co.uk/media/118009/fisk_guide_v2.pdf [Accessed 13 January 2009].

[Clearwater, Susan J.; Chris W. Hickey and Michael L. Martin. 2008. Overview of potential piscicides and molluscicides for controlling aquatic pest species in New Zealand. Science for conservation 283. March 2008. New Zealand Department of Conservation](#)

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[Copp, G.H., Garthwaite, R. and Gozlan, R.E., 2005. Risk identification and assessment of non-native freshwater fishes: concepts and perspectives on protocols for the UK. Sci. Ser. Tech Rep., Cefas Lowestoft, 129: 32pp.](#)

Summary: The discussion paper presents a conceptual risk assessment approach for freshwater fish species that addresses the first two elements (hazard identification, hazard assessment) of the UK environmental risk strategy. The paper presents a few worked examples of assessments on species to facilitate discussion.

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[De Silva, S.S; Subasinghe, R.P.; Bartley, D.M.; Lowther, A. 2004. Tilapias as alien aquatics in Asia and the Pacific: a review. FAO Fisheries Technical Paper. No. 453. Rome, FAO. 2004. 65p.](#)

Summary: This document reviews and analyses published literature, grey literature, and personal communications on the social, economic and environmental impacts of tilapias in the Asia and the Pacific.

Available from: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/y5728e/y5728e00.htm> [Accessed 3 March 2008]

[Eldredge, L. G. 2000. Non-indigenous freshwater fishes, amphibians, and crustaceans of the Pacific and Hawaiian islands. In Invasive Species in the Pacific: A Technical Review and Draft Regional Strategy. South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Samoa: 173-190](#)

Summary: Discusses the most invasive freshwater fish in the Pacific region and also includes a checklist of introduced fish to the Pacific.

[Hewitt, C.L, Campbell, M.L. and Gollasch, S. 2006. Alien Species in Aquaculture. Considerations for responsible use. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK. viii + 32 pp.](#)

Summary: This publication aims to first provide decision makers and managers with information on the existing international and regional regulations that address the use of alien species in aquaculture, either directly or indirectly; and three examples of national responses to this issue (New Zealand, Australia and Chile).

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[Hogan, A. and Vallance, T. \(undated\). An assessment of an NHT project to re-establish riparian zones as a Tilapia control measure. Queensland Department of Primary Industries, Walkamin QLD.](#)

Summary: A management plan that aims to reduce tilapia numbers by improving stream habitat quality.

[Mendoza, R.E.; Cudmore, B.; Orr, R.; Balderas, S.C.; Courtenay, W.R.; Osorio, P.K.; Mandrak, N.; Torres, P.A.; Damian, M.A.; Gallardo, C.E.; Sanguines, A.G.; Greene, G.; Lee, D.; Orbe-Mendoza, A.; Martinez, C.R.; and Arana, O.S. 2009. Trilateral Risk Assessment Guidelines for Aquatic Alien Invasive Species. Commission for Environmental Cooperation. 393, rue St-Jacques Ouest, Bureau 200, Montréal \(Québec\), Canada. ISBN 978-2-923358-48-1.](#)

Summary: In 1993, Canada, Mexico and the United States signed the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC) as a side agreement to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The NAAEC established the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) to help the Parties ensure that improved economic efficiency occurred simultaneously with trilateral environmental cooperation. The NAAEC highlighted biodiversity as a key area for trilateral cooperation. In 2001, the CEC adopted a resolution (Council Resolution 01-03), which created the Biodiversity Conservation Working Group (BCWG), a working group of high-level policy makers from Canada, Mexico and the United States. In 2003, the BCWG produced the Strategic Plan for North American Cooperation in the Conservation of Biodiversity. This strategy identified responding to threats, such as invasive species, as a priority action area. In 2004, the BCWG, recognizing the importance of prevention in addressing invasive species, agreed to work together to develop the draft CEC Risk Assessment Guidelines for Aquatic Alien Invasive Species (hereafter referred to as the Guidelines). These Guidelines will serve as a tool to North American resource managers who are evaluating whether or not to introduce a non-native species into a new ecosystem. Through this collaborative process, the BCWG has begun to implement its strategy as well as address an important trade and environment issue. With increased trade comes an increase in the potential for economic growth as well as biological invasion, by working to minimize the potential adverse impacts from trade, the CEC Parties are working to maximize the gains from trade while minimizing the environmental costs.

Available from: English version: http://www.cec.org/Storage/62/5516_07-64-CEC%20invasives%20risk%20guidelines-full-report_en.pdf [Accessed 15 June 2010]

French version: http://www.cec.org/Storage/62/5517_07-64-CEC%20invasives%20risk%20guidelines-full-report_fr.pdf [Accessed 15 June 2010]

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Summary: English:

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Invasive species - fish is available from: http://www.conabio.gob.mx/invasoras/index.php/Especies_invasoras_-_Peces [Accessed 30 July 2008]

Spanish:

La lista de especies del Sistema de información sobre especies invasoras de México cuenta actualmente con información acerca de nombre científico, familia, grupo y nombre común, así como como hábitat, estado de la invasión en México, rutas de introducción y ligas a otros sitios especializados. Algunas de las especies de mayor riesgo ya tienen una liga directa a la página de alertas. Es importante resaltar que estas listas se encuentran en constante proceso de actualización, por favor consulte la portada (<http://www.conabio.gob.mx/invasoras/index.php/Portada>), en la sección novedades, para conocer los cambios.

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Summary: Lists locations where tilapia have been established and their impacts.

FishBase, 2005. Species profile *Oreochromis mossambicus* Mozambique tilapia

Summary: FishBase is a global information system with all you ever wanted to know about fishes. FishBase on the web contains practically all fish species known to science. FishBase was developed at the WorldFish Center in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture

Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and many other partners, and with support from the European Commission (EC). Since 2001

FishBase is supported by a consortium of seven research institutions. You can search on [Search FishBase](#)

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Summary: The database includes records of aquatic species introduced or transferred from one country to another and does not consider movements of species inside the same country. Coverage of accidental introductions of organisms (e.g., through ship ballast waters) is not complete and records on this topic have been generally entered only when important impacts on fisheries or on the environment have been caused.

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[ITIS \(Integrated Taxonomic Information System\), 2005. Online Database *Oreochromis mossambicus*](#)

Summary: An online database that provides taxonomic information, common names, synonyms and geographical jurisdiction of a species. In addition links are provided to retrieve biological records and collection information from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) Data Portal and bioscience articles from BioOne journals.

Available from:

http://www.cbif.gc.ca/pls/itiscat/taxastep?king=every&p_action=containing&taxa=Oreochromis+mossambicus&p_format=&p_ifx=plgt&p_lang= [Accessed March 2005]

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Summary: Information on tilapia in South Korea.

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[Neira, I and Engle, C. 2003. Potential for restaurant markets for tilapia in Nicaragua. *Aquaculture CRSP Research Report 03-192, August 2003*.](#)

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[Nico, L. 2005. *Oreochromis mossambicus*. Nonindigenous Aquatic Species Database, Gainesville, Florida. Revision Date: 12/8/2004](#)

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Summary: Information on worldwide commercial production of tilapia.

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Summary: Information on tilapia in Indian reservoirs.

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Summary: Outlines the distribution of tilapia in Australia.

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Summary: Mentions that tilapia make up part of the diet of the Cape clawless otter in Groenvlei Lake.

Whitfield, A. K. 1999. Ichthyofaunal assemblages in estuaries: a South African case study. *Reviews in Fish Biology and Fisheries* 9: 151-186.

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