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Native fish are centre of attention

There are some rivers in north Queensland where barramundi thrived for centuries but nowadays doesn't live there anymore. The same story applies to mangrove jack.

Australia has over 230 native freshwater fish and their numbers have dropped dramatically.

Fish have been locked out of areas because of barriers like dams, weirs and road culverts. Scientists believe species like sawfish have disappeared altogether from north Queensland rivers due to commercial netting and habitat loss.

To help stop the decline of freshwater fish natural resource management body NQ Dry Tropics has released a book *Freshwater Fishes of the Burdekin Dry Tropics* that identifies native fish and helps people understand how to look after them.

The organisation's Paul Duncanson says there is a lot we can do to improve the future for native fish.

"Many people don't realise how many species we have in the region. There are over 60 freshwater fish species here. What's more, we've got some pretty special rivers. Some species are only found in the dry tropics like the small headed grunter and the soft-spined catfish. They're not found anywhere else in Australia." Paul says.

A significant number of introduced fish also threaten native species.

Fish keep creeks and rivers healthy; reduce them and we compromise river health, not to mention recreational and commercial fishing opportunities.

Thirty copies of the book have been given to the dedicated Eco Warrior students at Thuringowa State High School. The students spend a lot of time outside of school hours improving river banks, growing plants and testing water quality.

Freshwater Fishes of the Burdekin Dry Tropics is available from NQ Dry Tropics or online at www.nqdrytropics.com.au. NQ Dry Tropics would like to acknowledge the very generous assistance of Jason Carter (Alluvium Consulting) and Jim Tait (Econcern) in compiling the book.

Our region includes the local government areas of Townsville, Charters Towers, Burdekin, Isaac, Barcaldine, Etheridge, Hinchinbrook, Palm Island and the Whitsundays.

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