

Common smelt

Retropinna retropinna

Native

Not threatened

Common smelt are one of the most widespread fish in the Waikato Region. This species can rear in both the ocean and in freshwater lakes, making poor river connectivity less of an issue for recruitment. Because of their abundance and distribution, smelt are thought to have a considerable role in ecosystem functioning.

Common smelt swim in schools near the water's surface so can often be seen during the day feeding out in the open. They are good swimmers and can be found far inland if there are no barriers to their passage, as they are not good climbers.

Common smelt are an important part of the Waikato and Waihou River's whitebait fishery; however, they are known as second class whitebait and a lot less appealing than the regular inanga (*Galaxias*) whitebait. Common smelt can be distinguished from other whitebait easily because they smell like cucumber and have a small adipose fin behind the dorsal fin. They are also an important source of food for trout in the central North Island.



Photo: Josh Smith

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He hapori hihiri ▲ **Vibrant communities**

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