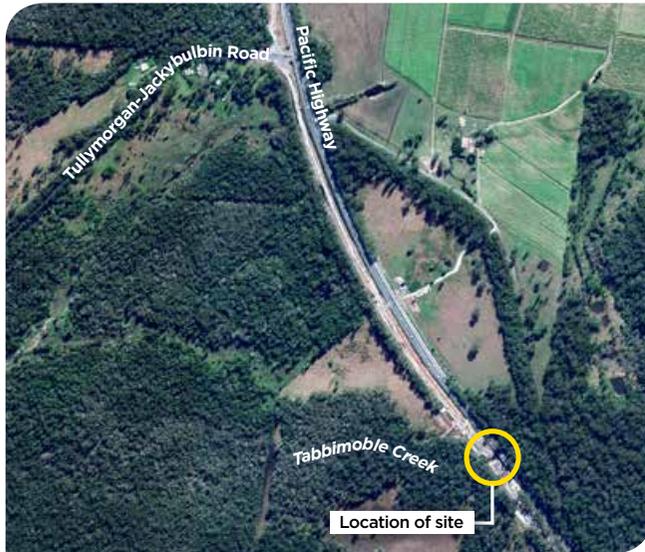


# Oxleyan Pygmy Perch

August 2017



Location of new bridge

## Why did the fish cross the road?

It is a good question and one that is being answered in a collaborative effort between Pacific Complete, Roads and Maritime, the Environmental Protection Authority, Davbridge Pty Ltd and the NSW Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries to rehabilitate Tabbimoble Creek, a habitat for a very small endangered fish.

The Oxleyan Pygmy Perch (OPP) is listed as endangered under the NSW Fishery Management Act 1994, Commonwealth Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 and Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1992 due to their limited distribution, rarity, dependence on specific habitat characteristics, and their vulnerability to habitat loss or degradation, water pollution, changes to hydrological regimes, barriers created instream, and competition or predation from introduced species.

It would be easy to overlook an adult fish measuring between 3.5 to 6 cm in size. The fish usually spawn between October and April when water temperatures exceed 20° celcius in waterways of the unique, lowland coast 'wallum' heaths. The OPP has a very limited habitat located from the north-eastern coast of NSW through to south-eastern Queensland. The decline in fish numbers highlights how important it is to conserve habitats to protect biodiversity.

We are doing our part on the Woolgoolga to Ballina project by building a new bridge over Tabbimoble Creek and rehabilitating the old one. The Tabbimoble Creek under the old bridge on the Pacific Highway was polluted from cattle use and suffered creek bed erosion. OPP are very particular in their water needs so we will also retrofit operational water quality measures on the old bridge by capturing bridge deck runoff and piping to nearby water treatment ponds (water quality basins).

Cattle are now excluded from the site and the banks of the creek have been extensively stabilised. This site is being replanted with native vegetation specifically selected for sensitive habitat areas of the creek bank and surrounds. DPI Fisheries have commended the project team stating 'the project has been a fantastic team effort with contributions from Pacific Complete, RMS, EPA, Davbridge Pty Ltd and NSW DPI Fisheries'.

On another project, the Devils Pulpit Pacific Highway upgrade, we have monitored the rehabilitation techniques used in OPP habitats and there has been a significant increase in the post-construction population of fish. This is great news and shows that the research, commitment and methods used on the Pacific Highway upgrade are having a positive impact on the Oxleyan Pygmy Perch. We will closely monitor fish numbers in Tabbimoble Creek when construction is finished and expect to see a similar improvement.



**Before:** Eroded banks under old Tabbimoble Creek bridge, May 2016



**After:** Tabbimoble Creek bank stabilisation and rehabilitation, August 2017