

Bullhead

Cottus gobio

Fish · Here all year · spawns Mar-May



Photo by Woluhar, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

A small, tadpole-shaped bottom fish with a broad flattened head, huge pectoral fins, bulging eyes set high, and no scales. The mottled brown colouring is superb camouflage against gravel. Also known as the miller's thumb, the bullhead lives under stones in the clean, fast, stony reaches of the Nith and its burns, and rarely moves more than a few metres in its life.

BEHAVIOUR

Bullheads are ambush predators, sitting motionless under a stone and lunging at passing invertebrates and small fish. They have no swim bladder, so they rest on the bottom and move in short darts rather than swimming freely. The male excavates a cavity under a stone, attracts a female to lay eggs on the roof of it, and then guards and fans the clutch alone until the young hatch.

WHEN TO SEE IT

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Sculpins (Cottidae)
SIZE	Typically 8-12 cm
UK STATUS	Protected under European habitats legislation

Photo by Woluhar, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Natureville