

Stone Loach

Barbatula barbatula

Fish · Here all year · spawns Apr-Jun



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A small, slender, bottom-dwelling fish, mottled brown and olive with a pale belly, a rounded tail and six sensory barbels around the mouth — the feature that names it. Stone loach live in the clean, stony burns and gravelly reaches of the Nith catchment, hiding under stones and among gravel by day and emerging after dark to feed.

BEHAVIOUR

Stone loach are nocturnal and hunt largely by touch and taste, using the barbels to detect insect larvae and small crustaceans in the sediment. They are sensitive to pollution and siltation, so their presence is a useful indicator of a healthy burn. In very low-oxygen conditions they can gulp air at the surface and absorb oxygen through the gut, which lets them survive drought pools that would kill other fish.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Stone loaches (Nemacheilidae)
SIZE	Typically 8-12 cm
UK STATUS	Native; a useful indicator of clean, stony water

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