

Stone Loach (*Noemacheilus barbatula*)

Size: 7.5 to 10cm

Carnivore – Feeds on small invertebrates (e.g. midge larvae, insect larvae and small crustaceans).



Breathes using gills. Water taken into mouth and forced over filaments with large surface area to maximise diffusion.

Six whisker-like barbels around lower jaw are used to detect prey at night (giving the fish the nickname of 'beardie'). During the day it hides under stones, partly buried and superbly camouflaged against stony riverbeds to evade predators. Can change tone to blend in with background. A female can spawn 10,000 sticky yellow eggs between April and August. Young grow rapidly and are mature by 1 year.