

COMMON BLEAK (*Alburnus alburnus*, Linnaeus, 1758)

Black Sea Basin

Native species

The common bleak grows 12 to 15 cm, with a maximum length of 25 cm. It is a common small, slender, laterally compressed species, covered with large, easily detachable scales. The mouth is small and upturned. The anal fin is very long, containing more than 17 soft rays. On the belly, between the pelvic and anal fins, there is a sharp keel that is not covered by scales. The back is greenish-grey, the sides are bright silvery and the belly is silvery-white.

The bleak lives in slow-flowing and standing waters, usually forming large shoals just below the surface.

It reaches sexual maturity in the third year, sometimes in the second year. Spawning occurs from April to May and sometimes extends into June. The female lays eggs in two or three batches, at intervals of 10 to 14 days. It does not require a specific substrate for spawning — eggs are deposited on grass, submerged plant roots, sandy banks etc.

The bleak feeds mainly on plankton, especially on fish eggs and larvae of other fish species, as well as on small organisms from the water surface. During the swarming of aquatic insects, its main food source becomes the eggs that insects lay on the water surface.

The common bleak is one of the most widespread and abundant fish species in Europe. It inhabits most of Europe north of the Pyrenees and the Alps to the Caucasus. It lives in areas from eastern Great Britain to Scandinavia in the west, around the Baltic Sea, and up to the Kola Peninsula. Its range extends to the northern coasts of the Caspian and Black Seas, into north-western Asia Minor and throughout the Danube basin reaching France to the northwest. It has also been introduced to Spain. In Slovenia, the bleak mainly inhabits the middle stretches of rivers in the Danube basin.

A decline in its population is observed only locally, usually due to mass fish kills caused by severe water pollution, but overall, the species is not threatened.

Common bleak – *Alburnus alburnus* (Linnaeus, 1758)

River basins in Slovenia: Danube

Spawning season: April to June

Number of eggs: 1,500 to 6,000

Sexual maturity: 2 to 3 years

Size: 12 to 15 cm (max. 25 cm)

Red List of Slovenia: –

Species status: Native

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