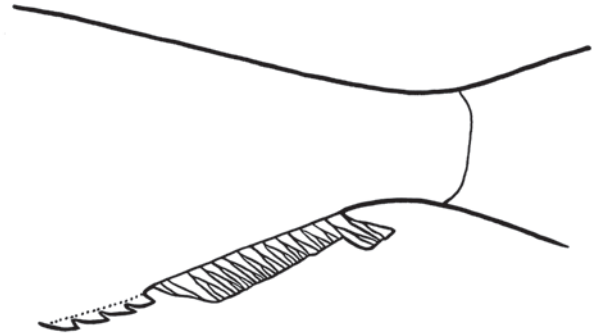


## Family Ehiravidae

### Dwarf sprats

A small family of about 27 species in 11 genera. They are mostly small, tropical, and subtropical herrings, mostly found in brackish and freshwaters; few are of commercial importance. Ehiravidae includes several pure freshwater species, such as the Southeast Asian genus *Sundasanx*, paedomorphic fishes reaching up to 30 mm SL. In West Asia, the only genus entering freshwaters is *Clupeonella* (tyulkas). They are a small group of brackish water species endemic to the Marmara, Black, and Caspian Sea basins where they frequently inhabit coastal lagoons, backwaters, and the slow-flowing sections of lower rivers. One species, *C. abrau* from Lake Abrau in Russia, is endemic to a small lake close to the coast. In freshwaters of West Asia, we recognise one species, *C. cultriventris*. Two additional tyulkas, *C. engrauliformis* and *C. grimmi*, are endemic to the Caspian Sea, both strictly marine and not reported to enter freshwater habitats. *Clupeonella tscharchalensis* is a freshwater species that inhabits rivers in the northern Caspian basin. It is described from Lake Chelkar (47°50'N 59°36'E) in

Kazakhstan. Until further studies are conducted on tyulkas from Lake Chelkar, we classify *C. tscharchalensis* as a valid species with fewer gill rakers than *C. cultriventris*. **Further reading.** Hoestlandt 1991a (diversity, distribution, biology); Kottelat & Freyhof 2007 (diversity).



**Figure 30.** Paddle-shaped last two anal rays and scute-like scales in front of anal fin in *Clupeonella* (from Kottelat & Freyhof 2007, after Whitehead 1985).

#### Key to species of *Clupeonella* in West Asia

1a - Pectoral tip rounded; interorbital distance 13–15 % SL (42–51 gill rakers).

.....*C. grimmi*

1b - Pectoral tip pointed; interorbital distance 16–18 % SL.

.....2

2a - Ventral keel soft; body depth 16–19 % SL; 56–67 gill rakers.

.....*C. engrauliformis*

2b - Ventral keel hard; body depth 18–25 % SL; 49–62 gill rakers.

.....*C. cultriventris*



*Clupeonella grimmi*, Caspian Sea, Iran; 100 mm SL.



*Clupeonella cultriventris*; Lower South Bug, Ukraine; ~75 mm SL.

### *Clupeonella cultriventris*

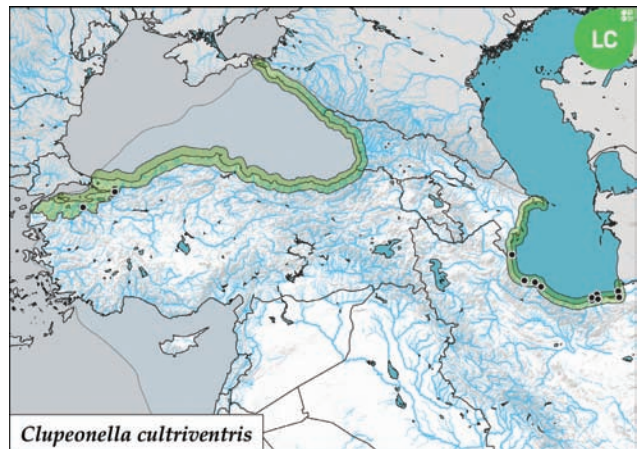
**Common name.** Common tyulka.

**Diagnosis.** Distinguished from other species of *Clupeonella* in Caspian basin by: ● 49–62 gill rakers / ● ventral keel hard, scratching human skin / ○ body depth 18–25 % SL / ○ tip of pectoral pointed / ○ interorbital distance 16–18 % SL. Size up to 120 mm SL.

**Distribution.** Caspian, Marmara, Azov, and Black Sea basin. Lakes Sapanca and Apolyont. Caspian Sea and Lower reaches of rivers as Volga, Ural, and possibly Terek.

**Habitat.** Euryhaline, in coastal waters, lagoons and lakes, estuaries, and lower reaches of large rivers with salinity up to 13 ‰. At sea, pelagic. Spawns near estuaries.

**Biology.** Pelagic. Marine, landlocked, or anadromous. Lives up to 6 years. Spawns in open water late in evening in April–July at 10–25°C. Eggs pelagic, usually laid in 5 m deep with at a salinity of 0.02–15 ‰. Two spawning runs in Azov Sea, one in spring and one in autumn. Individuals migrating in autumn overwinter near spawning grounds and spawn in spring. Return to sea after spawning. Juveniles migrate to sea during first summer. Feeds on zooplanktonic crustaceans (copepods, mysids, cladocerans), following their daily vertical movements in surface layers at night, descending during day.



**Conservation status.** LC; very widespread and often abundant.

**Remarks.** *Clupeonella muhlisi* from Lake Apolyont in Western Anatolia and Caspian *C. caspia* were treated as separate species. We could not find diagnostic morphological or molecular characters to distinguish these populations from *C. cultriventris*. Therefore, they are treated as synonyms.

**Further reading.** Hoestlandt 1991b (biology); Kottelat 1997 (systematics).