



Catch the facts about what's being caught in WA



The 2011/12 WA Recreational Boat Fishing Survey

The results of WA's biggest ever recreational boat fishing survey are in!

The innovative survey design, used for the first time, integrated data from multiple sources to cost-effectively generate results that cover the whole State.

The survey complements many other fish stock assessments we carry out, providing us with an even clearer picture of the health of our fisheries and aquatic ecosystems. This information is critical to help us to manage our aquatic resources more effectively and to ensure recreational fishing in WA remains some of the best in the world.

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Nearly 9,000 recreational boat fishers from across the State participated in the survey between March 2011 and February 2012. Nearly 3,000 kept fishing log books as part of an extensive series of phone surveys, while others were interviewed at boat ramps. Cameras also monitored boat ramp 'traffic' 24 hours a day, to gauge launches and retrievals at key boat ramps throughout the state.

The survey found that the iconic blue swimmer crab is our most popular recreational species with 871,000 caught in the 12-month period. More than half of those crabs were released, demonstrating that undersize crabs are being returned and recreational fishers are embracing their stewardship role.

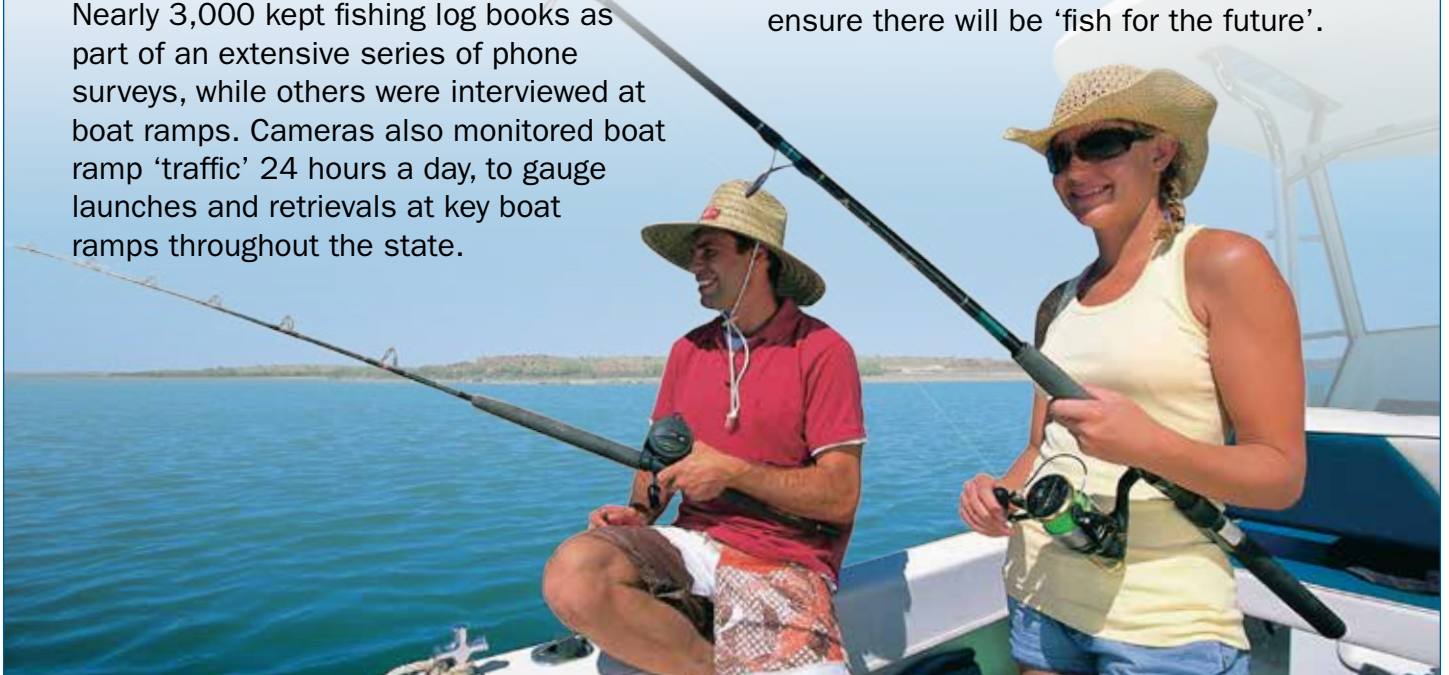
871,000
blue swimmer crabs caught in 12 months

Your recreational fishing fees at work

The survey could not have been achieved without the support of recreational fishers.

If you purchased a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence (RFBL) then you have helped fund this important project.

If you were chosen from the RFBL database to fill in a log book, or participated in a boat ramp interview, you can be proud that you have played an important part in helping us ensure there will be 'fish for the future'.



Key findings

Survey participants

2,977 recreational fishers recorded their catch and fishing effort in log books.

5,659 recreational fishers were interviewed about their catch and fishing effort at boat ramps.

- This survey included all boat-based recreational fishing, 24 hours a day/seven days a week, from public boat ramps and private access marinas and jetties.
- Survey results are from private vessels; charter fishing is not included in the results.
- Shore-based fishing was not included in the survey.

Fishing effort

By bioregion

West Coast	67%
Gascoyne	13%
North Coast	11%
South Coast	9%

By habitat

Pelagic	2%
Estuarine	16%
Nearshore	51%
Inshore	25%
Offshore	5%

By method

Line fishing	68%
Pots	26%
Diving	4%
Nets	2%

By season

Gascoyne Coast	80% of fishing occurred during autumn and winter
North Coast	77% of fishing occurred during autumn and winter
West Coast	75% of fishing occurred during summer and autumn
South Coast	66% of fishing occurred during summer and autumn

What fishers caught and released

Fishers reported catching more than **3.7 million** finfish, sharks, rays and invertebrates (e.g. rock lobster, crabs, squid) from a range of **225** different species.

Whiting, herring and pink snapper feature prominently among the most popular finfish species while blue swimmer crab and western rock lobster were the most caught invertebrate species.

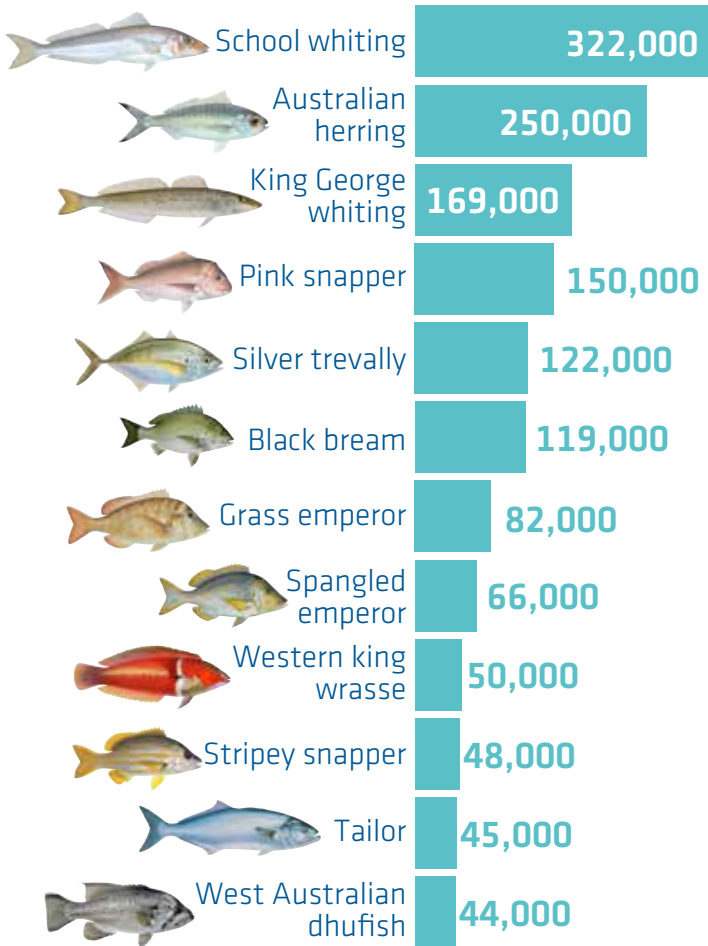
The survey also tracked the number of fish released by fishers and shows many West Australians fish responsibly to protect breeding stocks or to keep within bag and size limits.

Note: Charter fishing is not included in the results.

Finfish

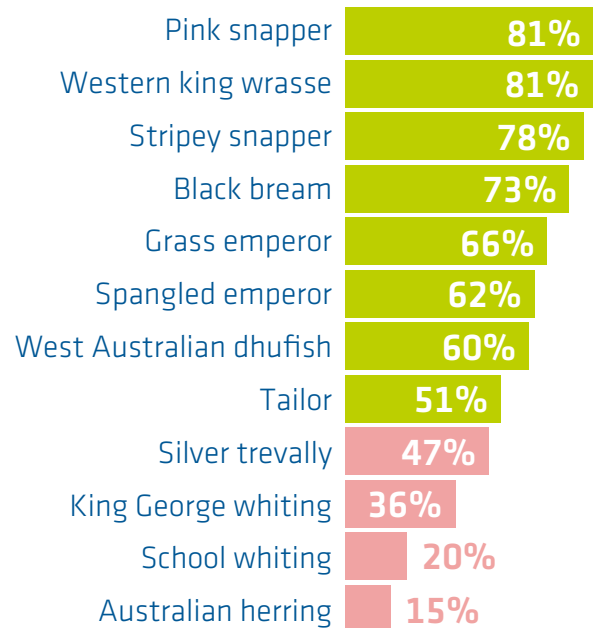
The catch

About 60% of the recreational catch was finfish (2.35 million) from nearly 200 scalefish species, and 15 ray and shark species. The 12 most commonly caught finfish were:



Release rates

Half of the recreational catch of all finfish (52%) was released. Release rates for the 12 most commonly caught finfish were:



Higher release rates were recorded for pink snapper, western king wrasse, stripey snapper, black bream, grass emperor, spangled emperor, West Australian dhufish and tailor.

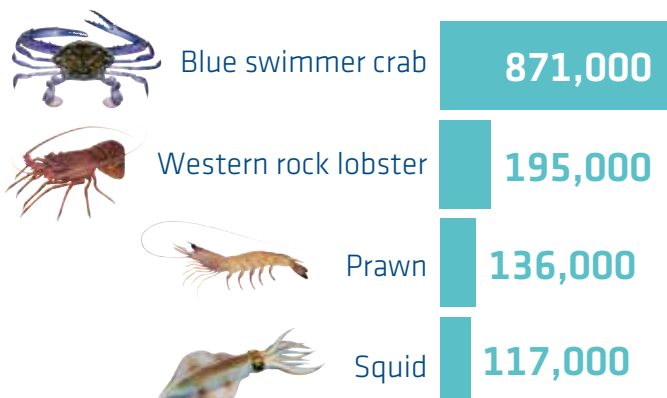
Lower release rates were recorded for silver trevally, King George whiting, school whiting and Australian herring.

Invertebrates

The catch

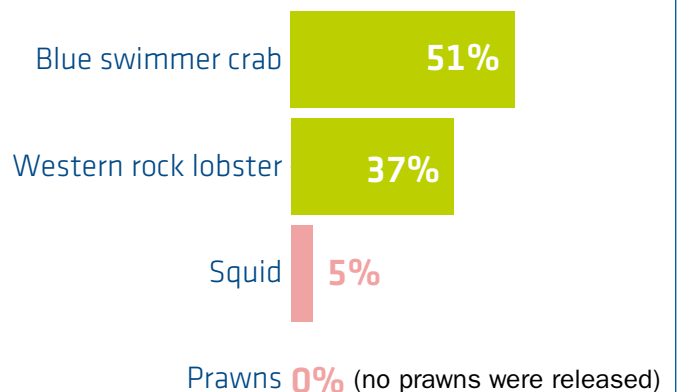
The other 40% of the recreational catch was invertebrates (1.36 million), including crustaceans (9 species) and molluscs (6 species).

The most commonly caught invertebrates were:



Release rates

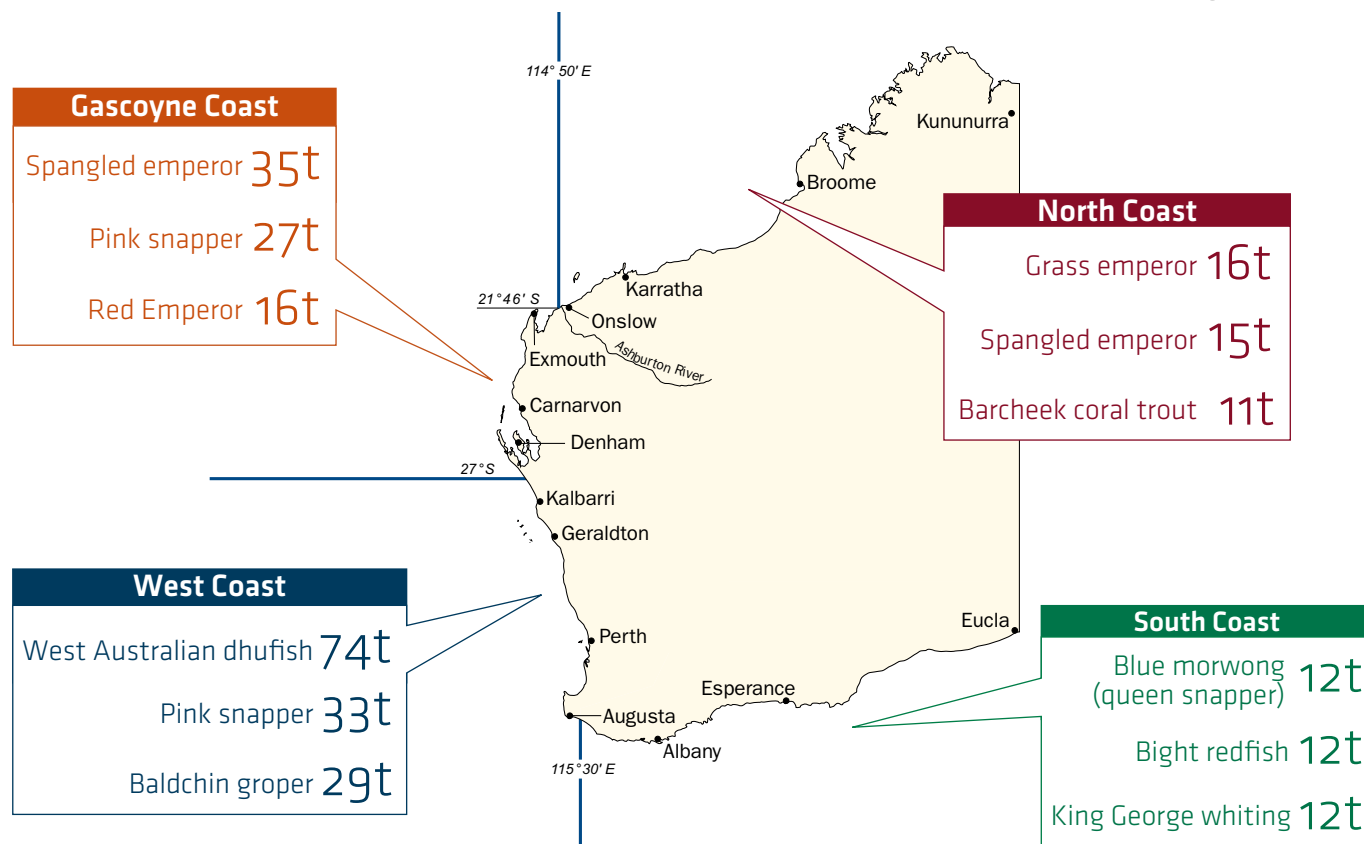
Less than half of the recreational catch of all invertebrates (40%) was released. Release rates for the 12 most commonly caught invertebrates were:



Estimated demersal scalefish catch

The survey results have allowed us to make estimates of the total harvest (weight of catch taken) by recreational fishers of key 'indicator' demersal species (those living on or near the ocean floor). Monitoring these slow-growing and long-lived species gives us a good indication of the overall health of stocks of this popular but vulnerable group of fish.

The estimated recreational harvests (in tonnes) for the top three species in each bioregion were:



Where to from here?

The results of the 2011/12 recreational boat fishing survey will set a benchmark for future surveys. A similar survey will be repeated every two years with the next one already underway for the period from May 2013 to April 2014. Catch estimates from these surveys will be compared with previous surveys to see if there have been any changes over time.

We will continue working closely with our research partners at Recfishwest and Edith Cowan University to improve our understanding of recreational fishing in each of the different regions of the State and ensure WA's fisheries remain sustainable.

A full version of the report is available at www.fish.wa.gov.au

Further information:

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Fish for the future

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