Almost 7,500 fishers took part in our second major boat fishing survey, the most comprehensive of its kind in Australia. The innovative format, using log books, boat ramp surveys and remote cameras, has been used to generate catch estimates covering the entire State.

The results of this second survey in 2013/14 revealed that blue swimmer crab was the most popular species – as it was in the first survey of this type in 2011/12 – with more than 900,000 caught. School whiting was the most popular finfish, with more than 350,000 caught.

Importantly, more than half the overall catch was released, showing that fishers are fishing responsibly by adhering to size and bag limits and embracing their role in helping to keep stocks sustainable.

Most boat fishing was done in the West Coast Bioregion (Augusta to Kalbarri), where catches of the prized demersal suite of species – which includes the West Australian dhufish – were similar for both surveys (about 150 tonnes).

If you bought a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence – more than 140,000 are issued each year – you helped fund this project.

We will carry out a survey every two years to compare catches over time. Along with annual commercial catch data, the survey provides information to help us manage our aquatic resources and ensure recreational fishing in WA remains among the best in the world.

The survey is vital in helping us understand recreational fishing patterns to ensure there will be ‘fish for the future’.
About the survey

The survey included:

- A 12-month phone-diary survey providing catch and effort data recorded in fishers’ log books.
- Surveys of fishers at boat ramps to collect data on sizes of key species.
- Video monitoring of boat launchings at key boat ramps.

Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3,036</td>
<td>fishers kept log books and took part in the phone-diary survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,425</td>
<td>fishers were interviewed at boat ramps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What fishers kept and released

More than **3.4 million** finfish and invertebrates were caught from **230** different species/groups. More than half the overall catch (56% for finfish and 57% for invertebrates) was released for reasons including size and bag limits, catch and release fishing or personal preference. During the survey, almost **11,000** fish were measured at boat ramps.

**Note:** Separate data is gathered for charter fishing, which was not included in these survey results.

### Invertebrates

About 40% of the recreational catch was invertebrates, including crustaceans (9 species) and molluscs (6 species).

The most commonly caught were:

- **Blue swimmer crab**: 900,000 caught, 70% released
- **Western rock lobster**: 340,000 caught, 40% released
- **Squid**: 80,000 caught, 5% released
- **Mud crab**: 25,000 caught, 55% released

While the total Statewide recreational catch for blue swimmer crabs was similar in number for both surveys, the Statewide release rate grew to 68% in 2013/14, which represented almost a 20% increase.

Environmental conditions have a significant impact on recruitment (addition of young crabs to the fishery), which affects the abundance of crabs in different areas.

Recreational fishing estimates for each key crab fishery will be used, with environmental data and other information, to ensure we continue to carefully manage each fishery.
About 60% of the recreational catch was finfish from nearly 200 scalefish species, and 15 shark and ray species.

The most commonly caught inshore and offshore demersal (bottom-dwelling) finfish were:

- **Pink snapper**: 150,000 caught, 85% released
- **West Australian dhufish**: 60,000 caught, 70% released
- **Blue-lined emperor**: 58,000 caught, 65% released
- **Spangled emperor**: 40,000 caught, 70% released
- **Stripey snapper**: 34,000 caught, 80% released
- **Breaksea cod**: 30,500 caught, 45% released
- **Baldchin groper**: 26,000 caught, 55% released
- **Redthroat emperor**: 24,500 caught, 75% released
- **Estuary cod**: 15,000 caught, 80% released
- **Bight redfish**: 15,000 caught, 35% released

The most commonly caught nearshore and estuarine finfish were:

- **School whiting**: 350,000 caught, 20% released
- **Australian herring**: 175,000 caught, 25% released
- **Black bream**: 125,000 caught, 90% released
- **King George whiting**: 100,000 caught, 25% released
- **Silver trevally**: 62,500 caught, 45% released
- **Western king wrasse**: 60,000 caught, 85% released
- **Western butterfish**: 26,000 caught, 75% released
- **Brownspotted wrasse**: 25,500 caught, 90% released
- **Southern bluespotted flathead**: 21,500 caught, 90% released
- **Chinaman rockcod**: 21,000 caught, 70% released

The most commonly caught pelagic finfish were:

- **Spanish mackerel**: 17,500 caught, 50% released
- **Samson fish**: 10,500 caught, 75% released
- **School mackerel**: 8,500 caught, 65% released

**Key:**
- **– Released**
- **– Kept**
The survey results allow us to estimate the weight (in tonnes) of the kept recreational catch for most demersal species, a popular but vulnerable group.

Estimated catch for top three demersal species in each bioregion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bioregion</th>
<th>Total catch 2011/12</th>
<th>Total catch 2013/14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gascoyne Coast</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink snapper</td>
<td>27 t</td>
<td>21 t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spangled emperor</td>
<td>35 t</td>
<td>17 t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldband snapper</td>
<td>10 t</td>
<td>15 t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North Coast</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grass emperor</td>
<td>16 t</td>
<td>12 t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barcheek coral trout</td>
<td>11 t</td>
<td>8 t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red emperor</td>
<td>10 t</td>
<td>7 t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>West Coast</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Australian dhufish</td>
<td>74 t</td>
<td>81 t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink snapper</td>
<td>33 t</td>
<td>30 t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldchin groper</td>
<td>29 t</td>
<td>20 t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South Coast</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bight redfish</td>
<td>12 t</td>
<td>10 t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue morwong</td>
<td>12 t</td>
<td>8 t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink snapper</td>
<td>9 t</td>
<td>5 t</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We will continue to monitor catches of these species to gain information over time about the sustainability of the stocks and to help us make future management decisions.

Where to from here?

We will keep working with our research partners at Recfishwest and Edith Cowan University to improve our understanding of the recreational fishing catch across WA.

The third recreational boat fishing survey has begun and information from fishers will be collected until August 2016, this time including information on shore-based fishing.

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

Further information:

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