

Welcome to the Angler's Log Book newsletter, designed to supply you with feedback on the data you are collecting as well as keeping you informed as to what is happening at Fisheries Research.

Research News

In mid October the winds of change swept over Fisheries Research with the retirement of Dr. Jim Penn, the director of the Research Division for 18 years. On the 28th of October many well-wishers gathered at his retirement function to celebrate his long and distinguished career and to give him a warm send off into the next phase of his life.



Three of the Department's longest serving researchers (left to right) Eric Barker, Dr. Jim Penn and Dr. Rod Lenanton have over 100 years of fisheries research experience between them.

Dr. Penn's many achievements during his 40 years with the department include his work in the Shark Bay and Exmouth Gulf prawn trawl fisheries, which led the way to the sustainable management of these valuable fisheries and his instrumental contribu-

tions to the development of the new research facility, the Western Australian Fisheries and Marine Research Laboratories (WAFMRL).

Following the completion of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) funded project 'The development of a rigorous sampling methodology for long-term annual index of recruitment for finfish species from south-western Australia', the estuarine and coastal finfish team have resumed sampling along the south-west coast.



Recruitment sampling at Mangles Bay, Rockingham.

The (soon to be published) report on the project documents a refined methodology, which identifies key sites and the months these sites require sampling to hopefully predict the level of recruitment of a number of commercially and recreationally important finfish species. Also from the sampling, important information on the communities of fish present at the selected sites is gathered. This information can be compared from year to year to detect significant changes in each community. A change in the fish community at a site may indicate a change in the health of the area.

While it is still early in the program, encouraging numbers of Australian herring, Australian salmon and yellow-eye mullet have been caught, suggesting there may have been successful recruitment of these species recently. This bodes well for fishing a few years down the track when these juvenile fish reach the legal size and some become welcome editions to your catch.



Tagging Samsonfish off Rottneest in Feb '05

Samsonfish Science!

As part of a project looking at the movements and spawning aggregations of Samson fish, approximately 2500 fish have been tagged off Rottneest Island in the past 12 months. So far there have been approximately 25 recaptures, with one Samson fish recaptured near Esperance one month later, a distance of approximately 1000 km from the tagging site! If you catch a tagged Samson fish please record the tag number, date and location of capture and the fish's fork length and send this information to Dr. Mike Mackie at mmackie@fish.wa.gov.au or call the Australian National Sportsfishing Association toll free on 1800 682 002. Please include your name and contact details and T-shirt size (small, medium, large or extra large) so the reward can be sent out to you. The tag should be left in place on fish being released – after the tag details are recorded of course.

Turn your fish frames into caps and t-shirts

By donating your dhufish or pink snapper frames to Fisheries Research you can turn a total of five frames into a cap or 10 frames into a T-shirt. The west coast demersal finfish team are researching dhufish and pink snapper right along the west coast and need lots more samples from the metro area and down south to Augusta.

Ideally, the whole frame, with the backbone unbroken and gonads intact, should be kept so that the total length of the fish can be measured and its reproductive condition determined.

Researchers will measure each fish frame and determine its reproductive state. Then the otoliths, or ear bones, will be extracted to find out its age. Otoliths lay down annual growth rings, much like tree rings, that can be counted under a microscope. Once a certain number of individual fish have been aged, the age structure of the population can then be determined. The age structure of a population is an important indicator of its general health.

Please attach a label to each frame stating your name, phone number, T-shirt size, the location the fish was caught (e.g. 'Bunbury'), depth of capture and date of capture. Plastic bags and small waterproof labels are avail-

able from Fisheries Research to assist in the storage and labelling of frames if required.

Please call Nick Jarvis on 9203 0204, Ian Keay on 9203 0206 or Jill St John on 9203 0205 for drop off points for frames and any enquiries.



The best way to remove the otoliths from a large, bony WA dhufish head is from the top, done with the aid of a handheld saw.

Log Book News

The number of anglers registered with the log book program continues to rise and has now exceeded 300. The introduction of the ocean edition of the log book earlier this year has been well received by anglers with the number of ocean editions distributed now exceeding the number of estuary editions. In an effort to keep the log book database up to date, so that we know what is happening in your fish-

ery faster, we suggest that you return your log sheets monthly.

This may mean that you go through your reply paid envelopes more quickly so let us know when you're running low (either via a note in your log sheet returns, by email or a phone call) and we'll post you out a bunch more.

The following table is a summary of log book data up to October 2005:

Number of anglers registered	307 anglers
% of anglers that reside in the metro area	52 %
% of anglers that reside in regional areas	48 %
Number of days fished	742 days
Hours fished in 2004	1185 hours
Hours fished in 2005 (Jan-Oct only)	1726 hours
Number of individual fish caught	7263 fish
Number of species caught	121 species
Number of species caught by ocean anglers	98 species
Number of species caught by estuary anglers	53 species
Most common species caught by ocean anglers	Australian herring, Pink snapper, King George whiting
Most common species caught by estuary anglers	Black bream, Toadfish, Australian herring
% of fish released	61 %

Tagged Freshwater Cobbler in the Blackwood River.

The freshwater cobbler (*Tandanus bostocki*) is a freshwater fish that is only found in south-western WA. Biologists at Murdoch University, in cooperation with the Department of Fisheries (DoF) and Department of Environment, are studying the migration patterns of native fish in the Blackwood River between Sues Bridge and Nannup. This project has tagged and released a substantial number of freshwater cobbler. If you catch a tagged cobbler please record the tag number, date and loca-



Grey nurse shark

tion of capture and the fish's length and call the Freshwater Fish Group at Murdoch University's Centre for Fish & Fisheries Research on 9360 2813 or call the DoF number on the tag and ask for Martin de Graaf.

Following the LOOKOUT FOR RED SPOT insert in the September newsletter we had a number of reports of outbreaks of the fungal disease in the Swan-Canning and Peel-Harvey estuaries and also in the Murchison River. In response to these reports, we have started a project to examine the effect of the disease on the black bream populations in these estuaries. We currently have a number of log book anglers assisting in the collection of samples for this project. If you can assist, please contact Mike Hammond on 9203 0213 or at mhammond@fish.wa.gov.au.

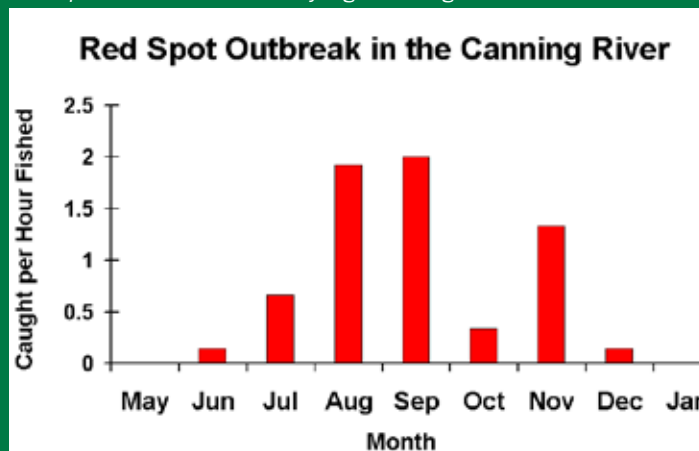
Remember to record in your log book any ul-

cers on fish that you catch. Using log book data we have been able to map an outbreak of the disease in the Canning River in late 2004 (see graph below). By comparing this data (and similar data collected in future years) with water quality data, the environmental conditions that are most favoured by the fungus can be determined. This information will be used to predict future outbreaks and to better understand the impacts on fish communities.



Black bream infected with Red Spot

Red Spot outbreak recorded by log book anglers



Shark spotting!

Scientists in the Department's Shark Section are conducting a study of the protected grey nurse shark and want to hear from people who have seen this species lately. The sites where these sharks gather need to be identified so monitoring programs can be developed. Once the sites are identified shark researchers will set up observation programs and conduct further research into their ecology. If you catch a grey nurse or spot one diving please record the location and any other information you might think is useful (eg. was the shark tagged,



Grey nurse shark

what size was it, how many sharks were present, etc.) and contact Justin Chidlow on (08) 9203 0111 or at jchidlow@fish.wa.gov.au

Post or Email?

To help us reduce the amount of paper used in the production of future log book newsletters we would like to offer you the option to receive future newsletters via email. Please contact Mike Hammond at mhammond@fish.wa.gov.au from the email address you want your electronic newsletter to be sent, with a brief message including your full name and postal address and stating that you'd like future newsletters via email. Your name will then be taken off the postal list and future newsletters and some other correspondence will be sent to you via email. Past newsletters will also soon be available from the fisheries website: www.fish.wa.gov.au

Regional Meetings Coming Soon!

Are you and your friends interested in finding out about the biology of WA dhufish and pink snapper? Would you like to meet some of the

research staff undertaking research on these fish in your area?

A series of regional meetings are being planned for early 2006 to convey to west coast fishers some of the results of the current dhufish and pink snapper biology project. The meetings will be held in Perth (at the WA Fisheries and Marine Research Laboratories), Geraldton and Bunbury/Busselton (locations to be confirmed).

If you are interested in attending any of these meetings please contact Nick Jarvis on 9203 0204 or at njarvis@fish.wa.gov.au and he'll notify you when the dates and program have been finalised.

Looking forward to meeting you!

Thank you for your support in 2005. Wishing you a merry Christmas and happy New Year!



THE ESTUARINE AND COASTAL FINFISH RESEARCH TEAM

Dr Kim Smith – ksmith@fish.wa.gov.au

Mike Hammond – mhammond@fish.wa.gov.au

Josh Brown – jbrown@fish.wa.gov.au

Mail: Research Angler Program, Department of Fisheries, PO Box 20, North Beach WA 6920

