



Newsletter No.22
January 2012



Welcome to the RAP Newsletter, giving you feedback on the data you are collecting and keeping you informed about what is happening at the Research Division of the Department of Fisheries.

Program launched to protect WA from alien aquatic pests

The State Government has launched a \$9.4 million two-year program targeting the protection of Western Australian aquatic environments from alien pests.

Fisheries Minister Norman Moore officially launched the comprehensive biosecurity program in November. The program is aimed at protecting WA waters, along with a special charter encouraging stakeholder organisations to become involved.

“Marine pests including fish, algae, mussels, worms, crabs and many other invertebrates directly cost the global economy more than \$1.5 trillion every year,” Mr Moore said.

“These pests can cause diseases in humans and quickly disrupt ecosystems and industries, as well as threaten tourism and damage or even close down fisheries and aquaculture activities.”

For example, the Northern Pacific seastar has successfully invaded the southern coasts of Australia and has the potential to move north on both sides of the country. The seastar eats a wide range of prey and can be potentially harming to the ecology and ultimately to the economy in its introduced range. This species is listed by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) as one of 100 of the world’s worst invasive alien species, alongside the red fox and the cane toad.

Freshwater pests can also cost the economy dearly. The Mozambique tilapia has spread worldwide through introductions for aquaculture. It is omnivorous and feeds on almost anything, from algae to insects, and may be a possible threat to native species through competition for food and nest space. It is also listed by the IUCN.

As part of the biosecurity program launch event, stakeholder and community signatories marked their commitment in support of the fight against aquatic pests by signing the biosecurity charter, established by the Department of Fisheries.

The Minister said the Department of Fisheries, as the lead agency for aquatic pest prevention, had developed new



A heavily 'biofouled' commercial vessel hull.

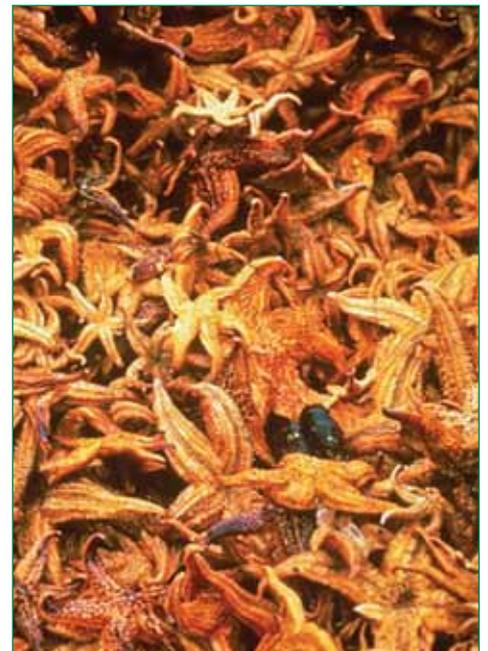
initiatives and projects to strengthen frontline defences.

The Department is already working on world-class strategies to manage the risks of the introduction of alien aquatic pests here in WA, boosted by the recruitment and training of dedicated biosecurity researchers, policy staff and Fisheries and Marine Officers, to form part of the frontline response to alien aquatic pests.

Without these measures there is a high risk of pests being introduced to the marine environment through fouling on the hulls of visiting vessels or through ballast water, and ongoing monitoring is vital.

In addition, the Department’s biosecurity program will aim to monitor and prevent the spread of alien aquatic pests in the State’s freshwater ecosystems.

For more information about aquatic biosecurity visit www.fish.wa.gov.au/biosecurity



Once established, Northern Pacific seastars can completely take over a marine ecosystem.
Photo: CSIRO

Biosecurity – what you can do

It is in everyone's interests to ensure alien aquatic pests aren't introduced or spread into our precious oceans, rivers and lakes.

As recreational fishers, you can play an important role in ensuring our waters are kept clean, healthy and pest-free.

In the marine environment, aquatic alien pests are very effective hitchhikers and arrive in Western Australia attached to the hulls of boats or in their internal water pipe systems. This undesirable build-up of marine growth is called 'biofouling'.

The Department of Fisheries is working closely with industry directly involved with shipping to ensure they do their utmost to stop biofouling occurring on their vessels.

Keep your boat pest-free

Once established, one of the most common ways aquatic pests can be spread is via the movements of recreational vessels.

Preventing their spread relies on good maintenance and effective boat antifouling.

Actions you can take include:

1. Maintaining trailered vessels onshore – check for any growth, rinse the boat with fresh water and dispose of all waste onshore.
2. Cleaning boats and gear – remove growth out-of-water as soon as possible and check regularly for build-up before moving your boat.
3. Applying and maintaining a suitable antifouling coating at licensed facilities.
4. Treating or cleaning internal seawater systems – high-risk areas potentially containing large numbers of juvenile pests or small species.
5. Dispose of all biofouling waste so it cannot get back into the water.
6. Keep maintenance records in case of marine pest emergencies.
7. Comply with requirements in the event of pest management measures.
8. Report anything unusual in the marine environment to the Department of Fisheries – it could be a marine pest!

For further information about hull maintenance of recreational boats go to www.marinepests.gov.au



Foul play – a recreational boat encrusted with biofouling.

Report a suspected alien pest species

As a group who regularly interact with the aquatic environment, recreational fishers can play an important role as the "eyes" of the community in spotting non-native species that may have found their way into our ecosystems.

If you see an unusual fish, alga, mussel, worm, crab or other invertebrate:

- Make a note of when and where you saw it (don't take a sample as this might spread it further in the water), including GPS readings if possible and photographs, and report this information to the Department of Fisheries on its FishWatch number 1800 815 507 or email biosecurity@fish.wa.gov.au

If you catch an unusual fish, alga, mussel, worm, crab or other invertebrate:

- Wrap it in paper and freeze it.
- Make a note of when and where you caught it, including GPS readings if possible and photographs, and report this information to the Department of Fisheries on its FishWatch number 1800 815 507 or email biosecurity@fish.wa.gov.au and let them know you have a frozen sample.



Tilapia are a threat in tropical waterways, breeding rapidly and eating a wide range of food including fish eggs.

Sign up to the biosecurity charter

The aquatic biosecurity charter is a partnership between the Department of Fisheries and those interested in promoting the protection of Western Australia's oceans and rivers from alien aquatic pest species.

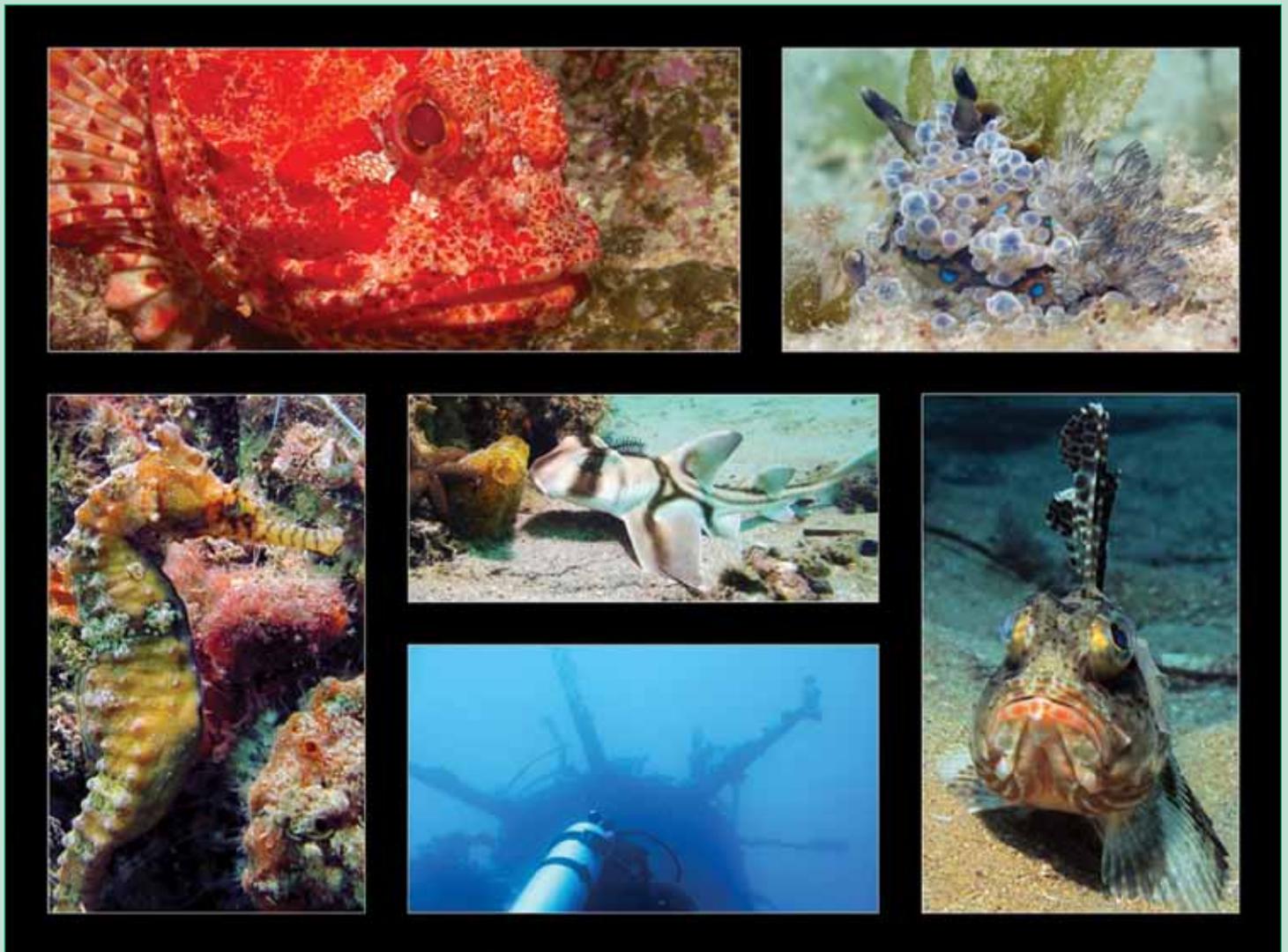
It is aimed at all members of the Western Australian community, ranging from industry and community interest groups to individuals. Anyone who has an interest in protecting our precious marine and freshwater ecosystems from alien aquatic pests can sign up to the charter.

If you or your organisation are interested in signing up to the charter or require more information, telephone (08) 9482 7333 or email biosecurity@fish.wa.gov.au

To see the charter and for more information about the Department's aquatic biosecurity program, visit www.fish.wa.gov.au/biosecurity

Congratulations Henrique!

Congratulations to Henrique Kwong for winning the 2011/2012 Novice Portfolio Competition at the Western Australian Underwater Photography Society (WAUPS). Henrique is a staff member here at Fisheries and a keen underwater photographer, and has contributed many photographs to the RAP newsletter over the years. His winning portfolio features six photographs all taken in Western Australian waters.



Henrique's winning portfolio.

Busselton Jetty Catch Card full steam ahead

Regular readers of the RAP Newsletter will appreciate that managing our State's fish stocks sustainably, requires scientific information – and lots of it.

After a successful trial of the Busselton Jetty Catch Card program in 2008, the initiative is back up and running following the completion of the \$27 million refurbishments of the iconic Busselton Jetty.

Every time you go fishing at the Busselton Jetty you can once again make an important contribution to science by simply filling in a Catch Card. Fisheries scientists would like every fisher who visits the jetty to grab a card, record details of their catch and drop off the completed card at the end of their visit.

Catch Cards are provided free and are available from the Busselton Jetty Interpretative Centre or Department of Fisheries in Busselton. Once you have completed your card, simply return it to the customised letterbox at Interpretative Centre and you have the chance to win random prizes throughout the year.

The catch rates of finfish and invertebrates (e.g. squid, crabs) caught at the Jetty can provide an index of local fish abundance and diversity. By monitoring seasonal and annual changes in the Jetty's fish community, scientists hope to develop a better understanding of how factors such as climate change, coastal development and fishing pressure are affecting our local fish stocks.

The Busselton Jetty is also a prime location for the capture of tailor, herring, garfish and whiting (all species) that are all nearshore finfish species that Fisheries researchers are seeking the donation of fish frames for biological analysis. When filleting, keep the head, skeleton and guts intact and drop the fish frames, fresh or frozen, into the Department of Fisheries Office in Busselton.

With your help, the Department of Fisheries can get a much better picture of the health of our fish stocks to ensure we all have fish for the future.

Michael Burgess

Seen anything weird lately?

Here at the Department, we like to know if anything unusual is happening out there in the ocean, rivers or estuaries. So, if you happen to see or catch something that you think shouldn't be there, then let us know. Either make a note on your logbook sheets or even better, take a photo and email it to

Silas.Mountford@fish.wa.gov.au

Send Us your Skeletons filleting event a big success

Department of Fisheries ambassador and AFL great Glen Jakovich teamed up with Peter Goulding from The Fishing School at Hillarys Boat Ramp on Saturday 17 December 2011 to help collect fish frames (otherwise known as skeletons) for vital research.

A marquee was set up and between midday and 2pm Fisheries staff and volunteers appealed to recreational fishers returning to the boat ramp to have their fish filleted in exchange for donating the frames.

Pro-filletter Peter and Jako were inundated with fish as recreational fishers willingly took part in the free filleting service.

With the weather simply perfect for boating and fishing, it was the ideal day for the event and within the two hours 50 frames were donated – a fantastic result all round and fishers should be commended for getting behind the vital Send Us Your Skeletons research initiative.

Amongst the 50 frames donated were eight dhufish, two pink snapper, three King George whiting and three southern school whiting.

All of these frames are required to help the Department obtain valuable information on key finfish species as the frames reveal important biological information, including the age of a fish.

One of the highlights of the day was the 90 cm dhufish caught by one fisher, who willingly exchanged the frame of the massive fish in return for having it filleted.

One of the more unusual species brought to the marquee was a small-tooth flounder that measured an impressive 49 cm, just slightly smaller than the maximum size of 55 cm they get to.

Thanks to the dedication of Department staff, volunteers, Jako and Peter, not only were a remarkable number of frames collected, but the Send Us Your Skeletons message was spread wider among the recreational fishing community.

Don't forget that those fishers who donate the required frames (fresh or frozen) before 1 July 2012 can go into the prize draw and be eligible to win a range of prizes including an incredible Monte Bello Islands charter trip, worth over \$5,000.

For more information about the Send Us Your Skeletons initiative, fishers can visit the Department of Fisheries website at www.fish.wa.gov.au/frames or call 9203 0111.

Lisa Hill

Special thanks goes to those who helped on the day:

Joshua Brown
Linda Wiberg
Glen Jakovich
Laurie Birchall
Elena Sulin

Chris Dowling
Jan Richards
Peter Goulding
Ken Jackson
Ben Carlish



One of the highlights of the day was the 90 cm dhufish Peter filleted. Photo: Lisa Hill



The filleting event was a huge success. Photo: Larisa Vanstien

Fisher of the month prize!

The RAP 'fisher of the month' prizes were decided by randomly drawing one log sheet returned in each month.

Congratulations to the following 'fishers of the month':

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------|---------------|
| August | Kim Meldrum | (West Coast) |
| September | Mathew Cox | (West Coast) |
| October | Glen Wakelam | (West Coast) |
| November | David Tunbridge | (South Coast) |

Each winner will receive a RAP floating key ring and stubby holder together with a family pass to the Naturaliste Marine Discovery Centre. Future winners will be published in upcoming newsletters. Make sure you fill out your log book and get your returns in to ensure your chance of winning!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT AND HAPPY FISHING!

THE RESEARCH ANGLER PROGRAM IS RUN BY THE NEARSHORE AND ESTUARINE FINFISH RESEARCH TEAM

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Fish for the future