



Catch the facts about what's being caught in WA

The 2017/18 WA Recreational Boat Fishing Survey

Almost 6,000 fishers took part in our fourth major boat fishing survey, which continues to be one of the most comprehensive of its kind in Australia.

About
135,000
boat fishing
licences issued
annually

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 fourth survey in 2017/18 revealed western

rock lobster was the most popular species, with about 695,000 caught. School whiting was the most popular finfish, with about 259,000 caught.

More than half the overall catch was released, showing fishers are keen to fish responsibly by adhering to size and bag limits.

There were high levels of popular species released – three out of four pink snapper (116,000 fish) were returned to the water after capture, for example, and close to two out of three West Australian dhufish (68,000 fish) were released.

Nearly two out of three blue swimmer crabs were released (667,000) by boat-based fishers and more than one in three western rock lobsters (695,000) were returned to the water.

The reasons given for these high release rates were that the returned fish or invertebrates were too small or below the minimum size limits.

68,000
dhufish caught
(kept or released)
in 12 months

Most boat fishing was done in the West Coast Bioregion (Augusta to Kalbarri), where the kept catches of prized demersal species, including West Australian dhufish, catches were steady in 2017/18 compared with 2015/16, and higher than 2013/14 and 2011/12.

If you bought a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence – more than 135,000 were issued in 2017/18 – you helped fund this project.

Since 2011 we have carried out a survey every two years to compare catches over time. Along with annual commercial and charter fishing 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.

667,000
blue swimmer
crabs caught
(kept or released)
in 12 months

About the survey

The survey included*:

- A 12-month phone-diary survey providing catch and effort data recorded in fisher's log books
- Surveys of fishers at boat-ramps to collect data on size for key species.
- Remote camera video monitoring of traffic at key boat ramps.

Participants

2,989 fishers kept log books and took part in phone-diary surveys

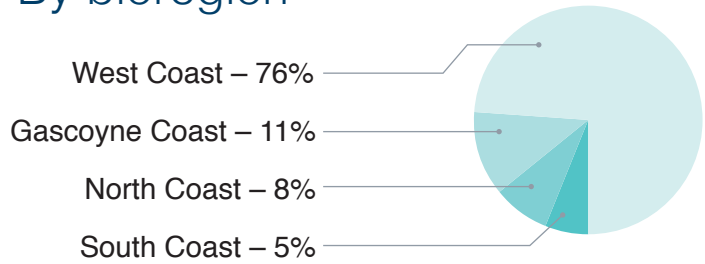
2,773 fishers were interviewed at boat ramps

* Charter fishing was not included in the survey results.

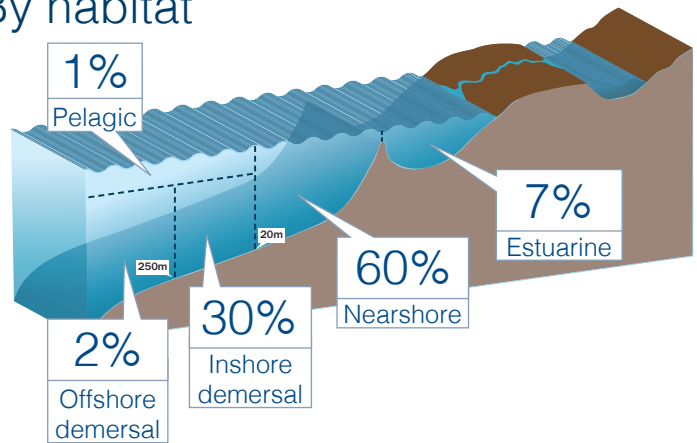
Key findings

Fishing effort

By bioregion



By habitat



What fishers caught and released

More than **2.8 million** finfish, sharks, rays and invertebrates were caught from **216** different species. More than half the overall catch (49% for finfish and 44% for invertebrates) was released for reasons including size and bag limits, catch and release fishing or personal preference.

Invertebrates

About 53% of the recreational catch was invertebrates (1.5 million), including crustaceans (seven species) and molluscs (five species).

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.

The most commonly caught were:

Western rock lobster



695,000 caught
35% released

Blue swimmer crab



667,000 caught
58% released

Squid



89,000 caught
3% released

Key:

Kept

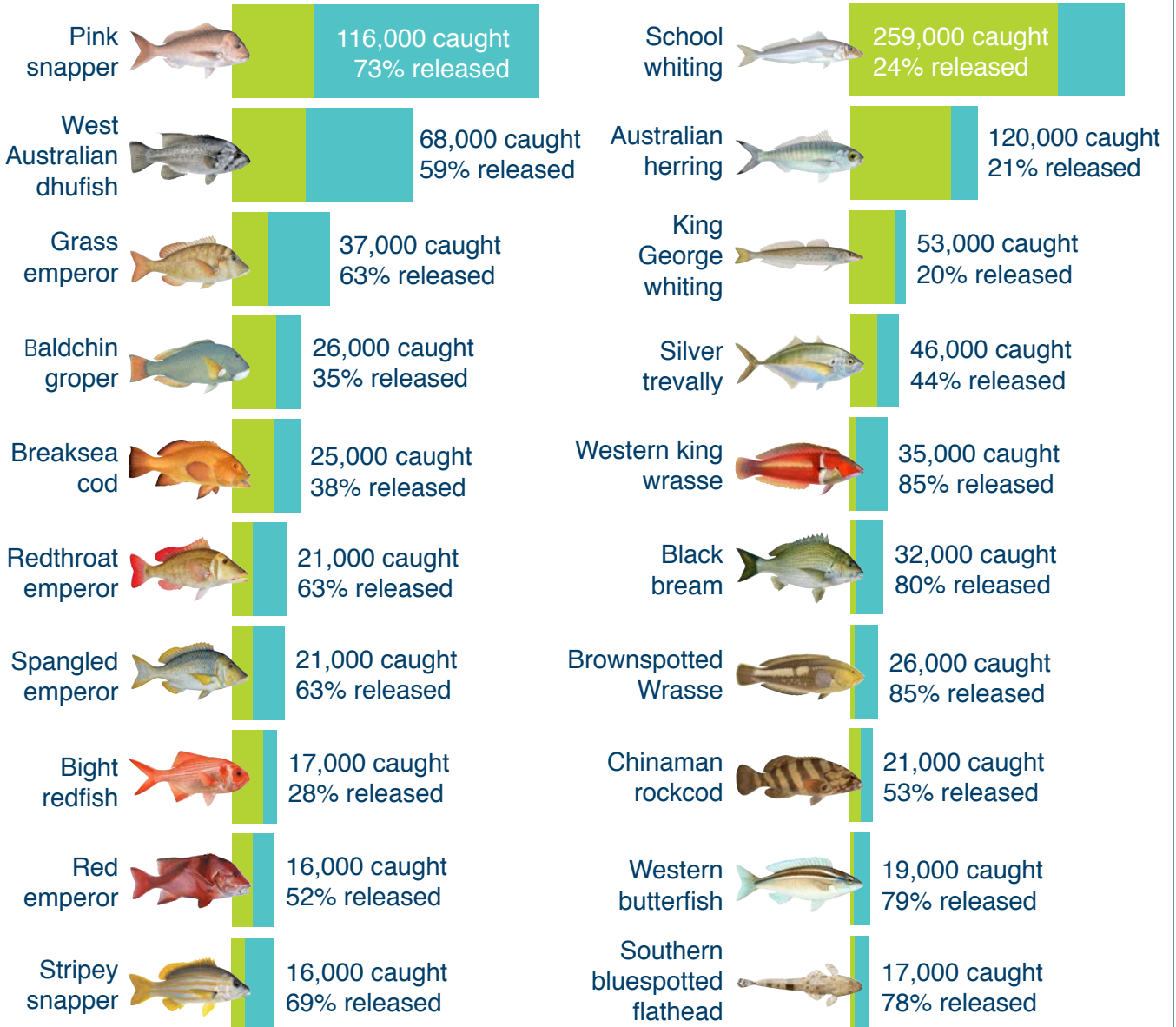
Released

Finfish

About 47% of the recreational catch was finfish (1.3 million) from 186 scalefish species, and 18 ray and shark species.

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

The most commonly caught nearshore and estuarine finfish were:



Key:

Kept

Released

The most commonly caught pelagic finfish were:



Estimated demersal scalefish catch

The survey results allow us to estimate the total recreational kept catch (in tonnes) for most demersal species, a popular but vulnerable group.

Catches for top three demersal species:

North Coast	Total catch in tonnes			
	2011/12	2013/14	2015/16	2017/18
Rankin cod	8	6	5	15
Red emperor	9	7	6	15
Barcheek coral trout	11	7	6	12

Gascoyne Coast	Total catch in tonnes			
	2011/12	2013/14	2015/16	2017/18
Pink snapper	28	23	32	21
Goldband snapper	10	15	15	12
Red emperor	15	11	13	11

West Coast	Total catch in tonnes			
	2011/12	2013/14	2015/16	2017/18
WA dhufish	75	82	113	123
Pink snapper	32	30	36	48
Baldchin groper	30	21	35	32

South Coast	Total catch in tonnes			
	2011/12	2013/14	2015/16	2017/18
Bight redfish	12	9	12	15
Blue morwong	12	8	9	10
Pink snapper	9	6	6	10



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

Where to from here?

We will use estimated catches from boat-based recreational fishing along with catches from charter-boat recreational fishing (reported in Tour Operator Returns) and shore-based recreational fishing (where available) to determine the total catch from the recreational sector.

We will keep working with our research partners at Recfishwest and Edith Cowan University to

improve our understanding of fishing Statewide and in each bioregion to ensure WA's fisheries remain sustainable.

The next statewide recreational fishing survey will commence in 2020.

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

Important disclaimer

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