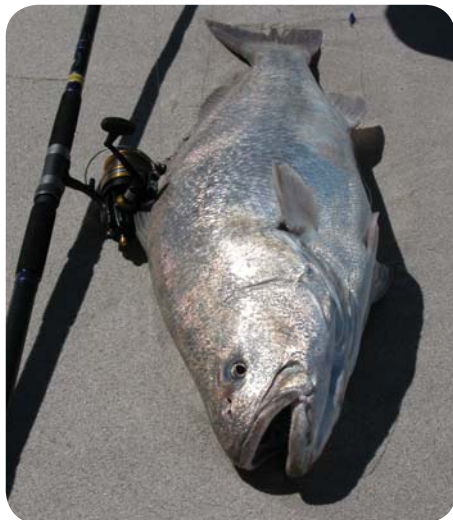


Collaboration secures future mullet stocks in the Yalata Indigenous Protected Area

The Yalata Aboriginal Community, the Alinytjara Wilurara Natural Resource Management (AWNRM) Board and the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) are working together to secure the future of one of Australia's most unique marine assets, the far west coast mullet population.

This valuable marine resource inhabits waters off the Yalata Indigenous Protected Area (IPA), bordering the Great Australian Bight Marine Park. Mullet support a renowned recreational fishery in this isolated region, attracting fishers from all over Australia.



Mullet captured off the coast of the Yalata Indigenous Protected Area

In recent years local communities have raised concerns about the mullet population, fearing it is being impacted by consistent fishing pressure. Preliminary information suggests this region represents both a juvenile nursery and a spawning area, and the lack of protected estuarine habitats potentially makes the population vulnerable to localised fishing pressure.

To help assess the population status of mullet in the IPA, Paul Rogers (SARDI) and Aude Loisier (AWNRM) have been working with members of the Yalata community; the Yalata

Land Management team and the AAWNRM Board, to discuss mullet biology and ecology, and to develop strategies to collect biological and recreational catch information from recreational fishers visiting the IPA. The information collected will be used to make recommendations for the future management of the mullet population in the IPA.

Local members of the Yalata community, the Yalata Land Management team and the AAWNRM Board now conduct recreational fishing surveys twice a month between October and April. The survey involves approaching fishers to collect biological and catch information, as well as ear bones (otoliths) from captured fish to determine their age. During the surveys members also discuss sustainable mullet fishing and handling techniques, to ensure the safe release of undersized or unwanted fish. Additionally, brochures providing information on mullet biology and fish release techniques, along with anonymous survey forms for the AAWNRM Board, are left at fisher's campsites.

Overall, the surveyors found that visiting fishermen were equally concerned about securing the future of mullet stocks in the IPA, and actively supported the surveys.

Strategies to minimise the related ecological impacts of a range of other issues are also being considered. These include: the flow-on effects of fishing activities on the local coastal environment and migratory shorebirds, the use of All Terrain Vehicles and procedures for adequate disposal of fish carcasses.

The collaborative approach being used to manage fishing within the Yalata IPA, by engaging local communities, government, research organisations and fishers, will ensure this region remains a unique fishing location, now and into the future.

Key Points

Fishing pressure may be impacting a renowned recreational mullet fishery in an isolated region.

Collaboration and a recreational fishing survey are used to collect valuable information for future management recommendations.

Awareness of sustainable mullet fishing and safe release techniques for unwanted or undersized fish is being addressed.

Strategies to minimise ecological impacts of other fishing related activities is also being considered.

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