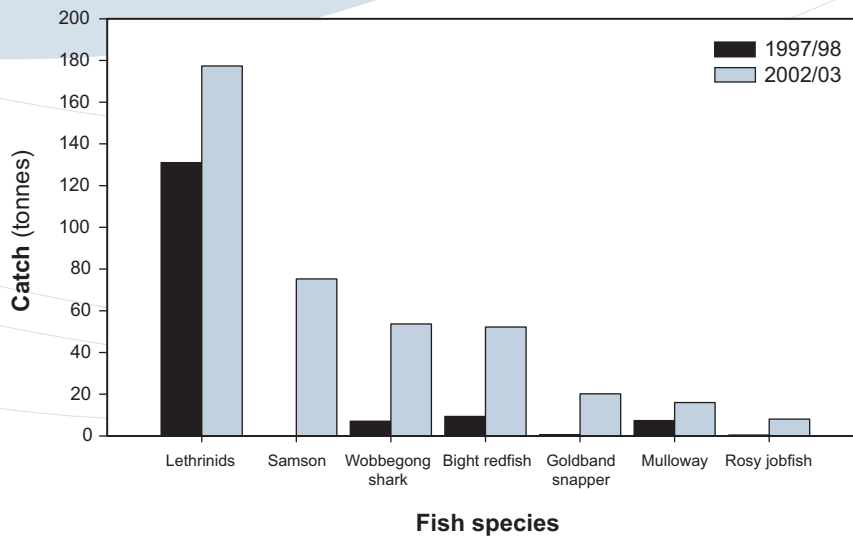


Demersal Scalefish Annual Catch



WEST COAST DEMERSAL SCALEFISH FIGURE 4

Increases in annual catches of selected species in the west coast demersal scalefish fishery during the five-year period from 1997/98 to 2002/03. Species with a current catch less than 8 t were not considered in this analysis.

Wetline Fishing

The catch and effort statistics (CAES) database indicates that over half (57%) of the wetline catch in 2002/03 was reported from the west coast bioregion, which includes the waters of the populous lower west coast and the Abrolhos Islands. Because wetline fishing by commercial vessels in this bioregion is moving towards managed fishery status, there is considerable overlap between this wetline report and the demersal scalefish report above. Nevertheless, full wetline statistics are given here for completeness and for comparison with the other marine bioregions.

The top 12 species comprised pink snapper (*Pagrus auratus*) 272 t, West Australian dhufish (*Glaucosoma hebraicum*) 232 t, whitebait (*Hyperlophus vittatus*) 158 t, Australian herring (*Arripis geogianus*) 88 t, sweetlip emperor (*Lethrinus miniatus*) 76 t, samson fish (*Seriola hippos*) 75 t, wobbegong (*Orectolobus* spp.) 54 t, nor-west snapper (Lethrinidae) 53 t, redfish (*Centroberyx* spp.*) 52 t, sea mullet (*Mugil cephalus*) 47 t, baldchin groper (*Choerodon rubescens*) 41 t and Spanish mackerel (*Scomberomorus commerson*) 36 t. It is interesting to note the increasing prominence of wobbegong shark and deeper-water species such as redfish in the wetline catch.

These catches of dhufish, pink snapper and emperor are the main product of the demersal scalefish operations reported on pp. 47-54, noting that catches of emperors are mostly from the Abrolhos Islands. Whitebait, Australian herring, and sea mullet comprise most of the catch of the beach bait fishers who operate between Tim’s Thicket and Augusta (see pp. 42-44).

*Expected to be Bight redfish (*C. gerrardi*)

RECREATIONAL FISHERIES

Regional Research Overview

The west coast bioregion continues to be the state’s most significant recreational fishing area, with 68% of the recorded effort or an estimated 5.6 million fishing days during 2003/04 (Baharthah 2004).

Scientific information to underpin recreational fisheries management in this bioregion is provided by dedicated research projects on specifically licensed high-value species (rock lobster and abalone), and research based on commercial fisheries in the finfish sector.

In addition, the estuarine and beach species have been the focus of a number of extensive studies, some undertaken by Department of Fisheries researchers and others in collaboration with postgraduate students, mainly of Murdoch University. These studies have provided biological data on herring, whiting (including King George whiting), blue swimmer crabs, prawns, tailor, cobbler, black bream and other minor species. For west coast offshore boat angling species – whiting (other than King George whiting), wrasse and groper (various species), Western Australian dhufish and snapper – some biological data is also available from previous Department of Fisheries studies based on the commercial fisheries, and from collaborative postgraduate research projects.

Estimates of abundance for most of these recreational species are also provided by statistical information from commercial fishing recorded in the long-run CAES database. To estimate total recreational catch and recreational/commercial catch