

Catch the facts about what's being caught in WA

2015/16 WA Recreational Boat Fishing Survey

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

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 third survey in 2015/16 revealed blue swimmer crab was the most popular species, with nearly 680,000 caught. School whiting was the most popular finfish, with

about 230,000 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 (89,000 fish) were returned to the water after capture, for example, and a similar proportion of West Australian dhufish (51,000 fish) were released.

Nearly three out of four blue swimmer crabs were released (481,000) and fishers returned more than one in three western rock lobsters (137,000) to the water.

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

Most boat fishing was done in the West Coast Bioregion (Augusta to Kalbarri), where catches of prized demersal species, including West Australian dhufish, were higher for this survey than the two previous ones.

If you bought a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence – more than 140,000 were issued in 2015/16 – 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.

51,000
*dhufish released
after capture*

*About
140,000
boat fishing
licences issued
annually*

680,000
*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.

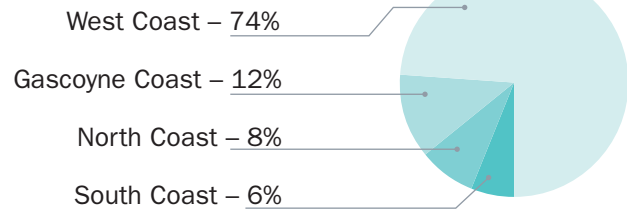
* Charter fishing was not included in the survey results.

Participants	
2,931	fishers kept log books and took part in phone-diary surveys
3,068	fishers were interviewed at boat ramps

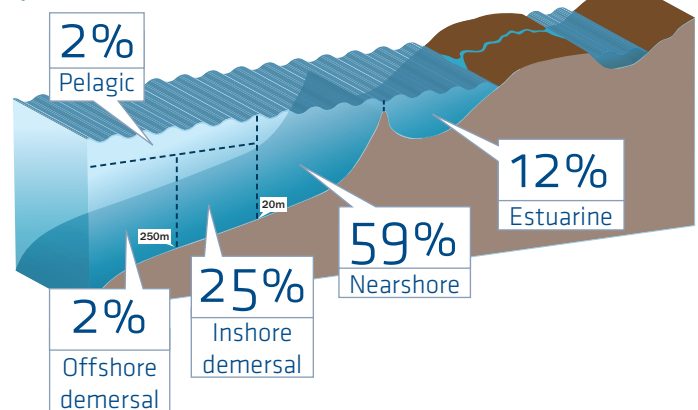
Key findings

Fishing effort

By bioregion



By habitat



What fishers caught and released

More than **2.5 million** finfish, sharks, rays and invertebrates were caught from **212** different species. More than half the overall catch (53% for finfish and 55% for invertebrates) was released for reasons including size and bag limits, catch and release fishing or personal preference.

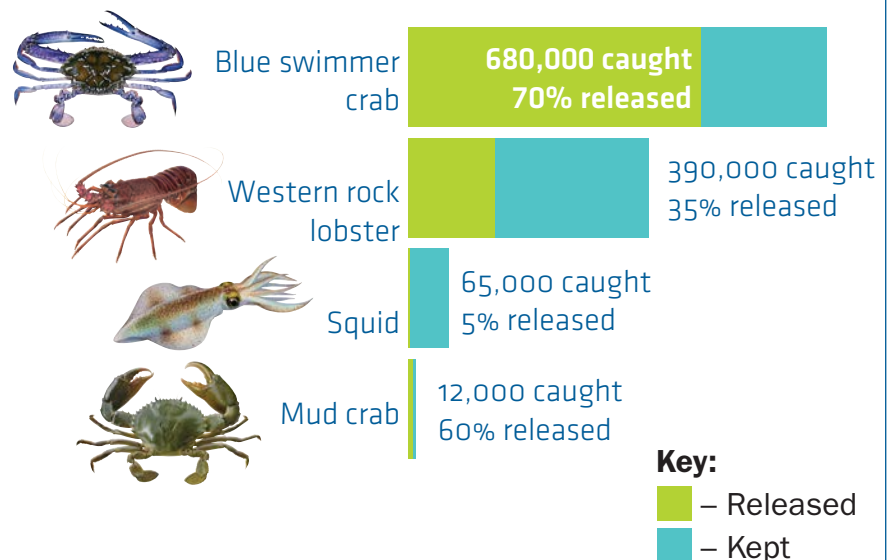
Invertebrates

About 45% of the recreational catch was invertebrates (1.1 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.

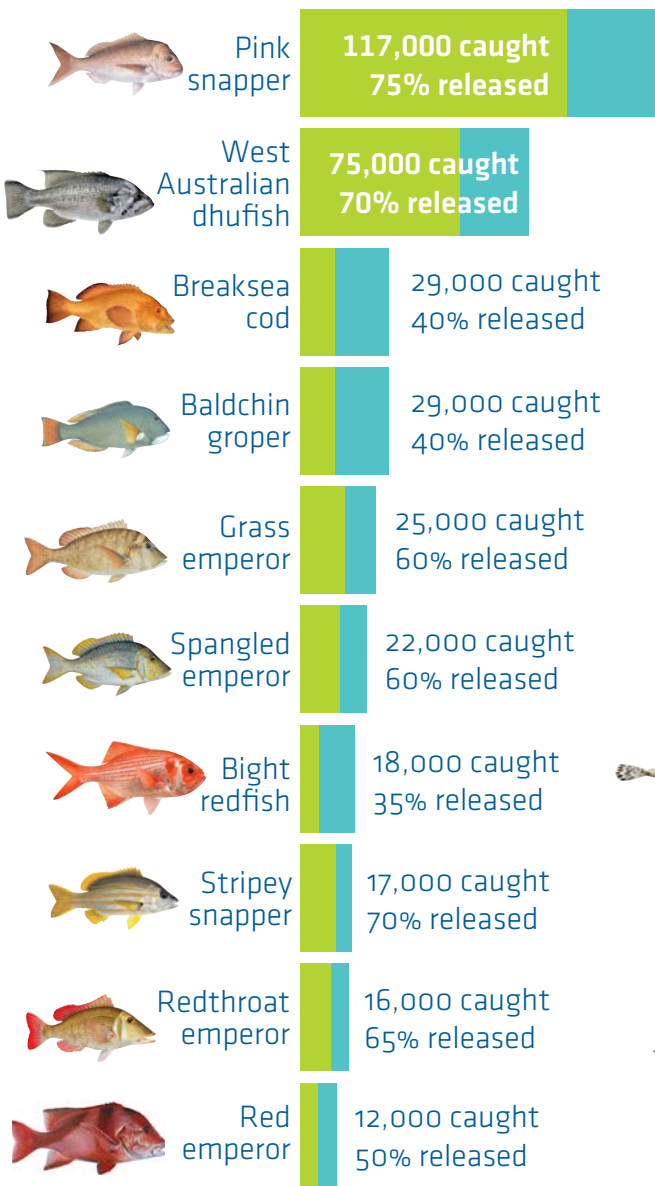
The most commonly caught were:



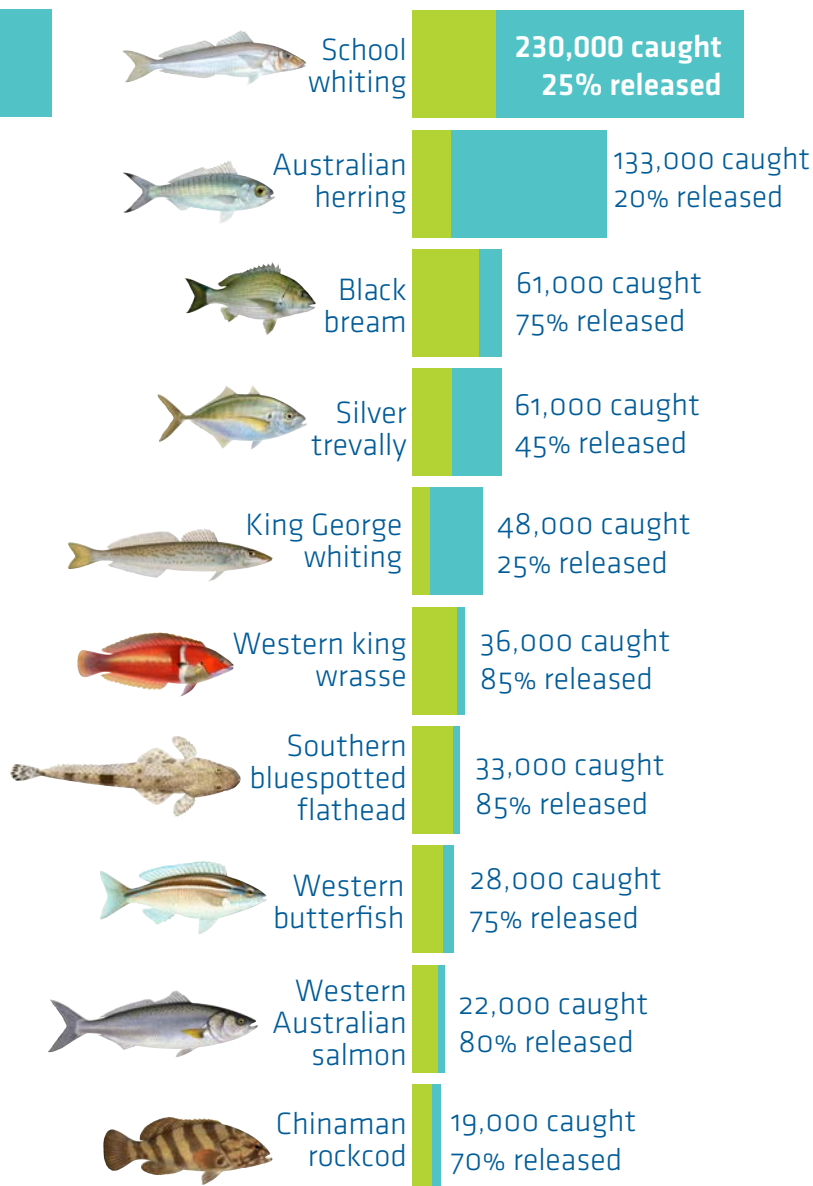
Finfish

About 55% of the recreational catch was finfish (nearly 1.4 million) from 182 scalefish species, and 18 ray and shark species.

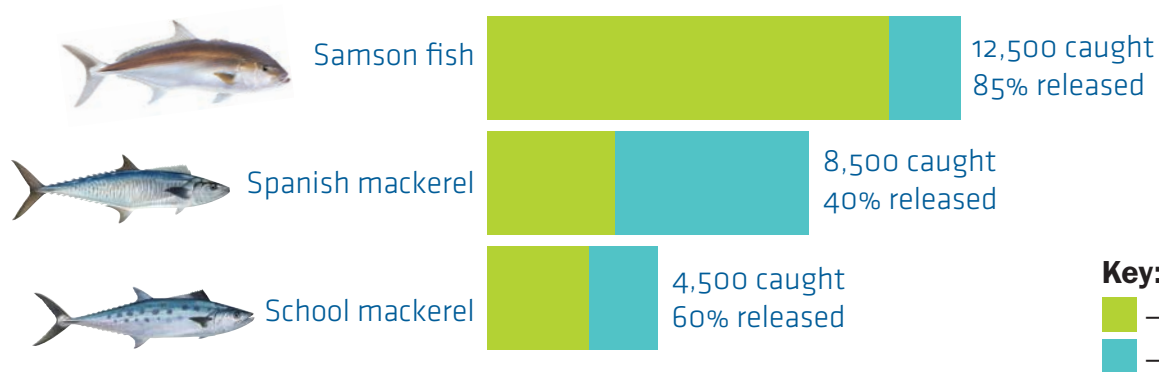
The most commonly caught inshore and offshore demersal (bottom-dwelling) finfish were:



The most commonly caught nearshore and estuarine finfish were:



The most commonly caught pelagic finfish were:



Key:
■ – Released
■ – Kept

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.

Note: estimated average weights and harvest estimates for the 2011/12 and 2013/14 statewide surveys have been updated following improvements in the way average weights of key species are now estimated.

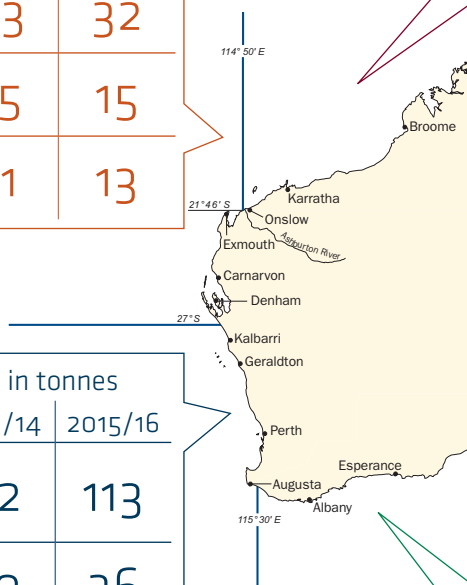
Catches for top three demersal species:

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

North Coast	Total catch in tonnes		
	2011/12	2013/14	2015/16
Grass emperor	15	12	6
Barcheek coral trout	12	7	6
Red emperor	9	7	6

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

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



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 fourth recreational boat fishing survey has begun and information from fishers will be collected until August 2018, including information on shore-based fishing.

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