What’s the Catch?

Fishing facts and figures

A survey of Tasmanian recreational fishing

Wild Fisheries Management Branch
Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment
Between December 2007 and November 2008, over 1000 Tasmanian households participated in a survey of recreational fishing. Here’s a summary of the results:

### Who’s doing the fishing?

- More than one in four Tasmanians (over 118 000 people) went fishing at least once in 2007.
- Almost twice as many males as females did some form of recreational fishing during the year.

Recreational fishing was most popular amongst younger fishers aged from 5–14 years with a participation rate of 38%. This declined to 13% for older fishers aged 60 and over. The highest numbers of people fishing were in the 30–44 years age group.

Most recreational fishers live in Hobart but the highest participation rates were in the rural and coastal regions around Hobart. Regionally, participation rates ranged between 24 and 33% of the population.

### How much fishing is being done?

- Almost 90% of all recreational fishers in Tasmania fished in saltwater during 2007-08 at least once.
- The average number of days fished in saltwater in Tasmania was five days per fisher.
- Just over half of all fishing days were spent in inshore coastal waters.
- Line fishing was the most popular method of marine fishing, used on 86% of all fishing days. Fishers spent an average of 3.3 hours dangling a line per day fished.
- The next most popular methods were potting (8%), dive harvesting (5%) and gillnetting (3%).
- Line fishing accounted for the vast majority of the total finfish catch, which was dominated by flathead and Australian salmon.
- Around 2% of the total finfish catch was taken by gillnet. This consisted mainly of bastard trumpeter, blue warehou, several species of sharks and rays, mullet and Atlantic salmon.
- Collectively, Tasmanians fished for over 640 000 person days during 2007–08.
### Catches of Key Recreational Marine Scalefish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fish Type</th>
<th>No. of Fish Kept</th>
<th>No. of Fish Released (% total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flathead</td>
<td>1 066 000</td>
<td>745 000 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Salmon</td>
<td>110 000</td>
<td>78 000 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flounder</td>
<td>32 000</td>
<td>2 000 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunas</td>
<td>27 000</td>
<td>19 000 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullet</td>
<td>24 000</td>
<td>14 000 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trumpeters (Striped)</td>
<td>17 000</td>
<td>3 000 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trumpeters (Bastard)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiting</td>
<td>15 000</td>
<td>16 000 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garfish</td>
<td>15 000</td>
<td>2 000 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Bream</td>
<td>13 000</td>
<td>35 000 (73%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Trevally</td>
<td>11 000</td>
<td>11 000 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Warehou</td>
<td>9 000</td>
<td>&lt;1 000 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Calamari</td>
<td>41 000</td>
<td>4 000 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gould’s Squid</td>
<td>73 000</td>
<td>9 000 (11%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What’s being **caught**?

- 1.07 million flathead (or 293 tonnes) were kept and 745 000 flathead were released by Tasmanian recreational fishers.
- Other important species included Australian salmon (110 000) and flounder (32 000). Black bream were also important, although most of the catch was released.
- In addition to scalefish, a variety of invertebrates were captured, including Gould’s squid and calamari, rock lobster, abalone and scallops.

**Flathead facts** - Did you know 2 main species of flathead are taken in Tasmania? Sand flathead are caught mainly by recreational fishers and commercial fishers mostly take tiger flathead.

What’s **changed** since the last statewide survey in 2001?

- The number of recreational fishers in Tasmania was similar in 2000–01 and 2007–08, but the participation rate was lower in 2007–08, a consequence of population growth.
- The number of days spent fishing was slightly lower in 2007–08, mainly due to a fall in shore-based fishing activity.
- Although the number of recreational gillnet licences issued has remained constant, recreational gillnet usage in 2007–08 was less than half that in 2000–01.
- The total recreational finfish catch (kept and released) taken by Tasmanians during 2007–08 was about 20% lower than in 2000–01. 2.29 million scalefish were retained in 2000–01 compared with 1.62 million in 2007–08.
- The total catch of Australian salmon in 2007–08 was estimated at less than half that for 2000–01.
- Catch increases were evident for tunas, squid and whiting, and were probably linked to greater availability of these species during 2007–08.

**Release rates** for most species were higher in 2007–08, notably for sport fish such as trout, black bream and tuna. Community education programs and more restrictive bag and size limits have also contributed to higher rates of release.

**Recreational Fishing Effort by Region**

- **NORTH**: 21%
  - Key species: Flathead, Australian Salmon
  - Main fishing platform: Boat-based

- **EAST**: 18%
  - Key species: Flathead, Australian Salmon, Bream
  - Main fishing platform: Boat-based

- **SOUTH EAST**: 35%
  - Key species: Flathead, Scallops, Rock lobster
  - Main fishing platform: Boat-based

- **WEST**: 3%
  - Key species: Australian Salmon, Abalone
  - Main fishing platform: Shore-based

- **INLAND**: 23%
  - Key species: Trout
  - Main fishing platform: Shore-based

**Over half** of the state’s total fishing effort (54%) occurred off the east and south-east coasts.

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What does all this mean for recreational fishing in Tassie?

The survey results show that recreational fishing is an important activity in Tasmania that brings significant social and economic benefits to the community.

Fishery managers use the survey data to help sustainably manage our recreational fisheries.

Additional statewide surveys will be undertaken to monitor key trends over a longer period and to gather specific information about fisheries such as rock lobster and scallops.

More information:

To read a full version of the report, go to www.tafi.org.au – click on ‘Publications’.

For information about recreational marine fishing, pick up a Recreational Sea Fishing Guide from Service Tasmania outlets or visit www.fishing.tas.gov.au

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