

Boarfish

(Pentacerotidae)

EXPLOITATION STATUS UNDEFINED

Three species are taken incidentally in the Ocean Trawl Fishery. Little biological information available for any of these species.

SCIENTIFIC NAME	STANDARD NAME	COMMENT
<i>Paristiopterus labiosus</i>	giant boarfish	
<i>Pentaceropsis recurvirostris</i>	longsnout boarfish	
<i>Zanclistius elevatus</i>	blackspot boarfish	



Background

Members of the boarfish family (Pentacerotidae) are found in temperate waters of all oceans, but total only 13 species of which 10 are found off Australia. All species feature strong spines and heads with rough striated bony plates, giving rise to the name 'armourhead' for some deepwater species.

Other features such as extended fin rays and elongation of the mouth are greatly developed in some species. A few species are restricted to deepwater, others are found in coastal depths less than 50 m, while the pelagic armourhead inhabits oceanic seamounts and ridges.

At least six species of boarfishes are known to inhabit NSW waters. Two are relatively small, non-commercial species including the bigspine boarfish (*Pentaceros decacanthus*), which is commonly caught on the upper slope by trawl in 250-600 m, and the threebar boarfish (*Histiopertus typus*) that has been recorded once from 100 m depth off Port Stephens.

The NSW commercial catch of boarfishes comprises three inshore species, of which, the giant boarfish (*Paristiopterus labiosus*), and the longsnout boarfish (*Pentaceropsis recurvirostris*) are the most commonly marketed. The smaller blackspot boarfish (*Zanclistius elevatus*) is also sometimes marketed.

The giant boarfish is found in temperate waters from northern NSW to southern Tasmania, including coastal waters of eastern Victoria to Port Philip Bay, and is also found around New Zealand. The fish's primary habitat is over sandy or muddy substrates in shallow water less than 100 m, but it has been recorded to depths of 170 m. Observations by divers suggest juveniles form small schools but, as adults, boarfish are typically seen in pairs that tend to stay in the same area for extended periods.

The longsnout boarfish is more widely distributed, occurring around southern Australia from about Sydney to Rottneest Island in WA. It is similar in size and shape to the giant

boarfish but has a distinctly more elongated and slender snout and adults of both sexes have distinctive black stripes across their silvery-white body and head. The blackspot boarfish is found in depths of 50-300 m from southern Queensland throughout NSW to southern WA, including Tasmania.

Juvenile giant boarfish have wide, contrasting dark bands over a silver-white coloured body. Adult females retain this colour pattern whereas males lose the banding as they mature, becoming uniformly brown with numerous yellowish spots. Giant boarfish are characterised by their strong protruding snout and fleshy lips. The species typically use their elongated snouts to forage in sand and mud for shell-fish and other invertebrates. The maximum-recorded size for the boarfish is about 90 cm in total length and 12 kg in weight but most fish caught are 45-60 cm and 1.0-2.5 kg.

Annual landings of boarfish in NSW are small, (generally ranging between 5 and 12 t) and have recently been less than 5 t. All are taken by the Ocean Trawl Fishery. The boarfish is considered a fine table fish and commands a high market price. There is no minimum legal length for boarfish in NSW.

Additional Notes

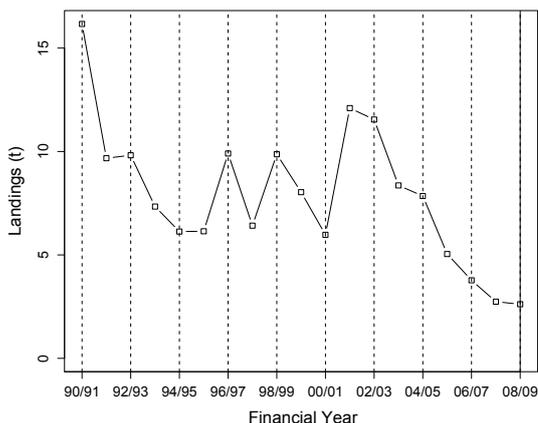
- There has been a recent decline in landings of boarfish, but catch rates by fish trawl are stable.
- Giant boarfish are targeted by spear fishers when seen in relatively deep water, but boarfish are not caught in any numbers by recreational line fishers.

Catch

Recreational Catch of Boarfish

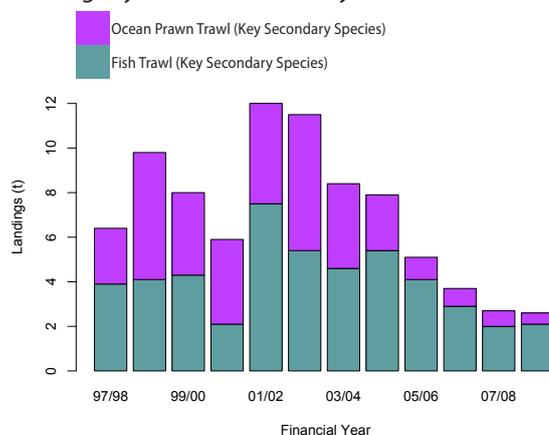
The annual recreational harvest of boarfish in NSW is likely to be less than one tonne.

Historical Landings of Boarfish



Commercial landings (including available historical records) of boarfish for NSW from 1990/91 to 2008/09 for all fishing methods.

Landings by Commercial Fishery of Boarfish



Reported landings of boarfish by NSW commercial fisheries from 1997/98. Fisheries which contribute less than 2.5% of the landings are excluded for clarity and privacy.

Further Reading

Gomon, M.F., J.C.M. Glover and R.H. Kuitert (1994). The Fishes of Australia's South Coast. Adelaide, State Print.

Hutchins, B. and R. Swainston (1999). Sea Fishes of Southern Australia - Complete Field Guide for Anglers and Divers. Smithfield, NSW, Gary Allen.

Kailola, P.J., M.J. Williams, P.C. Stewart, R.E. Reichelt, A. McNee and C. Grieve, Eds. (1993). Australian Fisheries Resources. Canberra, Australia, Bureau of Resource Sciences, Department of Primary Industries and Energy, and the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.

Yearsley, G.K., P.R. Last and R.D. Ward (1999). Australian Seafood Handbook. Hobart, CSIRO Marine Research.

Please visit the CSIRO website, <http://www.marine.csiro.au/caab/> and search for the species code (CAAB) 37 367002, 37 367003 and 37 367005, common name or scientific name to find further information.