Tailor

(Pomatomus saltatrix)

EXPLOITATION STATUS  FULLY FISHED

Significant recreational and commercial harvests in Queensland and NSW. Queensland assessment in 2004 indicated that the stock was close to the biomass at maximum sustainable yield (Bmsy) reference point.

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**Background**

Tailor (Pomatomus saltatrix) occur in estuarine and close inshore waters along the Atlantic coasts of North and South America (where they are known as ‘bluefish’) western and southern Africa (where they are known as ‘elf’), and throughout the Mediterranean. In Australia, tailor occur from southern Queensland to eastern Bass Strait, and in southern Western Australia. Tailor form large schools in surface waters close to shore and are voracious predators. They are a very popular species with recreational fishers, and the catch by recreational fishers is estimated to be many times larger than the catch by commercial fishers.

Although reported to live for greater than 10 years and weigh more than 10 kg, the majority of tailor landed by both recreational and commercial fishers off south-eastern Australia are 2 to 4 years of age, between 30 and 50 cm in length and 0.5 to 1.5 kg in weight. The growth of tailor has been the subject of many studies throughout the species’ world wide range, and there is considerable variation between the different stocks. Tailor in South Africa and North America grow faster and to a greater size than in Australia.

In NSW, juvenile tailor occur in estuaries and large coastal bays, and older fish are commonly found in surf zones of beaches and around rocky headlands. Mature fish migrate north along the coast to spawn during late winter and spring off northern NSW and southern Queensland. The regular seasonal occurrence of large schools of pre-spawning fish in the surf zone has led to significant targeted recreational fisheries on the islands off southern Queensland (such as Stradbroke and Fraser Islands).

Because of their inshore schooling behaviour and predatory nature, tailor are susceptible to very high exploitation rates, and some stocks have been overfished and are subject to stringent management regulations to promote recovery of the stock. An assessment in 2004 of the eastern Australian tailor stock by researchers from the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries concluded that the...
stock was heavily fished and remained relatively productive, but more protection of spawning fish would be beneficial. The assessment recommended an increase in the minimum legal length of tailor from 30 to 40 cm total length (TL), and an initial increase from 30 to 35 cm is due to be implemented in Queensland in March 2010. The minimum legal length in NSW is 30 cm TL.

Additional Notes

- Tailor is an important recreational species along the east coast (and also in WA).
- NSW recreational catch was estimated to be about 250 t in 2000/01; commercial catches are subject to trip limit regulations, with landings currently about 50 t.
- Queensland has an estimated recreational catch of 300 t and an annual commercial quota of 120 t.
- A full stock assessment model was developed by QDPI&F in 2004 - assessed as fully fished, with stock at about the level which would sustain optimum yield. This assessment is currently being updated.
- Catches mostly contain 2 - 4 year old fish (30 to 50 cm in length), but the species is reported to attain a maximum size of 15 kg and length of about 1 m.
- The minimum legal length in NSW is 30 cm TL and there is a bag limit of 20 tailor per angler per day.

Catch

Recreational Catch of Tailor

The annual recreational harvest of tailor in NSW is not accurately known and can be subject to significant fluctuations between years, but is thought to be in the range of 150 to 300 t.
The length distribution of tailor landed by NSW commercial fishers is comprised mainly of fish between 28 and 45 cm fork length (FL). The minimum legal length for tailor in NSW is 30 cm total length (which equates to about 27 cm FL). Note that prior to 1993 tailor were not subject to a minimum legal length.

The length distribution of tailor landed by recreational trailer-boat fishers between 1993 and 1996 was comprised mainly of fish between 25 and 60 cm fork length (FL). The minimum legal length for tailor during this period was 30 cm total length (which equates to about 27 cm FL).

Further Reading


Please visit the CSIRO website, http://www.marine.csiro.au/caab/ and search for the species code (CAAB) 37 334002, common name or scientific name to find further information.