



NSW Research Angler Program

Issue 12 November 2016

Welcome to the “NSW Research Angler Program Newsletter” – providing you, the research anglers and spearfishers of NSW, feedback on the data you are collecting by donating your frames to research.

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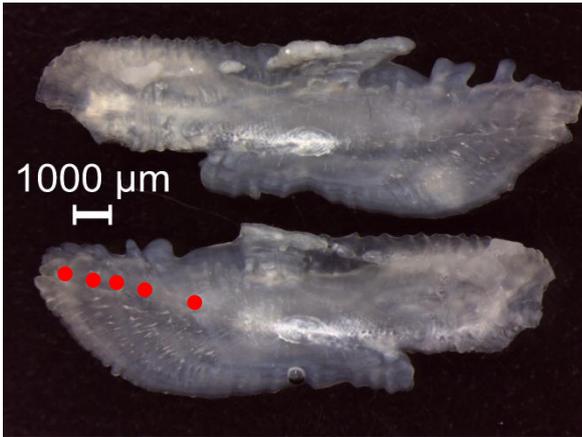
Notable Donations from Winter 2016

Winter is often seen as a tough time of year to be an East Coast fisho – the days become shorter, the water cools, the fish tend to slow down – and so does the fishing. But not for everyone! This was perfectly demonstrated by some of the quality fish donated to the NSW Research Angler Program this past winter by some very competent anglers and spearos. Straight into the action was seasoned beach expert Rick Jones with a truly enormous 85 cm greenback tailor taken off the sand at Urunga on a slab-bait whilst chasing mulloway. Amazingly, this is not the largest tailor Rick has encountered in his career having previously landed a fish of 96 cm! Fortunately for Fisheries NSW researchers, Rick’s most recent monster tailor now contributes to our knowledge of these impressive predators in NSW waters.



85 cm of thumping Urunga greenback tailor caught by Rick Jones over winter using some classic beach fishing tackle. Photo courtesy Rick Jones.

Despite being a fairly common (and abundant) species in NSW estuaries and nearshore marine waters, 'greenback' tailor of this size are reasonably uncommon. In fact, Rick's fish was one of the largest tailor researchers have recorded from NSW waters and despite its impressive size, analysis of its otoliths revealed it to be just 5 years old! Despite being recorded to at least 12 years of age elsewhere in the world, just six tailor estimated to be five years old have been so far donated to the NSW RAP (out of more than 400 individuals) making specimens like Rick's fish a revealing insight into the growth and longevity of the species in NSW. And at a growth rate of almost 17 cm per year, this fish must have had an enormous appetite, as demonstrated by its eating a bait intended to catch a big beach mulloway!



The otoliths from Rick's 85 cm tailor and its five counted rings indicated giving it a youthful 5 years of age.



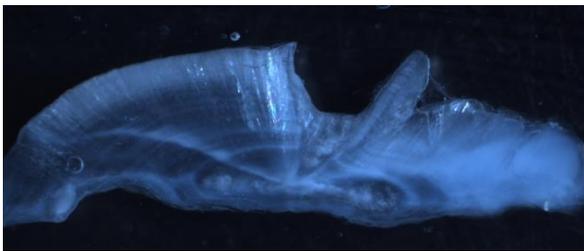
Removal of the otoliths from a big tailor is a precision operation, despite the crude tools used!



Rick Jones with 85 cm of beach mulloway bycatch! Despite its size, Rick's fish was estimated to be just 5 years old. Photo courtesy Rick Jones.



Another cracking winter catch donated to the NSW RAP was a beautiful PB snapper taken by Luke Cameron offshore from Coffs Harbour in July. Assisted by a very capable accomplice in the form of [Tackle World Port Stephens](#)' Brent Hancock, Luke's whopping 90 cm male fish had the knobby bump on the forehead distinctive of trophy snapper in this part of the world. And not only did Luke's snapper look old, but analysis of one of its otoliths revealed a ripe estimated age of 17 years, making it one of the largest 17 year old snapper so far recorded in NSW waters!



Above left: A suitably stoked Luke Cameron with 90 cm of trophy 'old man' snapper donated to the NSW RAP over winter. Photo courtesy Brent Hancock.

Below left: The otolith section from Luke's jumbo Coffs snapper showing the growth rings used to estimate its ripe 17 years of age.

Another fine specimen of an East Coast snapper donated to the NSW RAP over winter was caught by Daniel Brown. Daniel has donated several mulloway frames to the program in the past and was busy trying to add to his tally whilst fishing for jewies at Stockton Beach in June when he had a run from a good fish. Instead of being the expected mulloway, Daniel had managed a rather unusual bycatch off the beach in the form of an 80 cm 5 kg male snapper! Not only was Daniel's snapper an unusual species to encounter off the beach, but was also unusual in that its estimated age of 10 years made it easily the largest 10 year old snapper so far recorded in NSW waters.



The ten growth rings counted in Daniel Brown's donated snapper otolith show it to be the largest 10 year old snapper so far recorded in NSW!



Tastiest beach bycatch ever! 80 cm and 5 kg of Stockton Beach snapper caught on a tailor strip whilst chasing mulloway. Photo courtesy Daniel Brown.

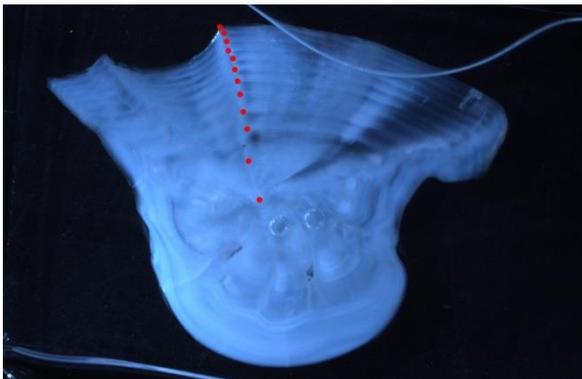


Scott Robson with 135 cm and 27 kg of fat Stockton Beach mulloway estimated to be 10 years old. Photo courtesy Scott Robson.



Double trouble! Two prime silver slabs taken off the beach by Scott Robson and donated to the NSW RAP over winter. Photo courtesy Scott Robson.

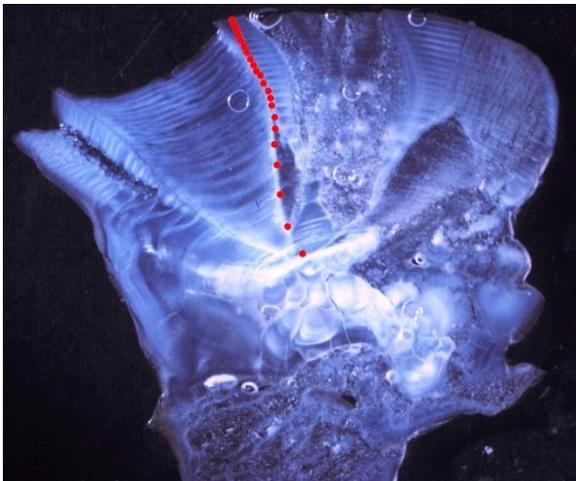
Where would the NSW RAP Newsletter be without the donation of some big mulloway? Well, we had plenty donated this winter and the source of five of them was Scott Robson fishing around Newcastle. Five fish was impressive enough, but making these fish even more special was that they were all trophy-sized individuals including three fish over 130 cm. Scott's epic run of big jewies even included a simultaneous double hookup off the beach!



The otolith section from Scott Robson's largest winter-donated mulloway – a whopping 135 cm but estimated to be just 10 years old.

Interestingly, these five fish were all estimated to slightly different ages, despite their similarity in sizes. Scott's smallest fish at 118 cm was estimated to be 8 years old together with two larger fish of 133 and 134 cm. Scott's largest winter-donated fish (pictured at left) at 135 cm was estimated to be 10 years old, but his oldest at 11 years was a slightly smaller 128 cm model. As occurs for all fish, growth rates likely vary due to many factors, including factors including water temperature, prey quality and quantity, sex, age, behaviour and genetics. A great winter of mulloway chasing for Scott and great winter for the NSW RAP as beneficiaries of these valuable donations.

The largest mulloway frame donated to the NSW RAP over winter however, was a 146 cm monster caught by gun Port Stephens angler Jessica Slow. This was one of five fish Jessica and partner Andrew Sharp donated to the program over winter making them quite the mulloway-hunting dream team! The impressive numbers for Jessica's fish didn't stop with its 146 cm size as analysis of one of its otoliths revealed it to be the ripe age of 20 years, making it just the sixth 20 year old mulloway so far recorded from NSW waters! And just to prove that Jessica is no slouch catching wily old jewies was the other fish she donated to the program over winter which was estimated to be an astounding 15 years of age, despite being only 113 cm in length!



An oldie but a goodie! The otolith section from Jessica Slow's 146 cm Port Stephens fish showing the 20 rings used to estimate its impressive age.



Jessica Slow with 146 cm and 20 years' worth of thumping Port Stephens mulloway. Just the sixth 20 year old mulloway so far recorded in NSW waters. Photo courtesy Andrew Sharp.

Project Progress – Winter 2016

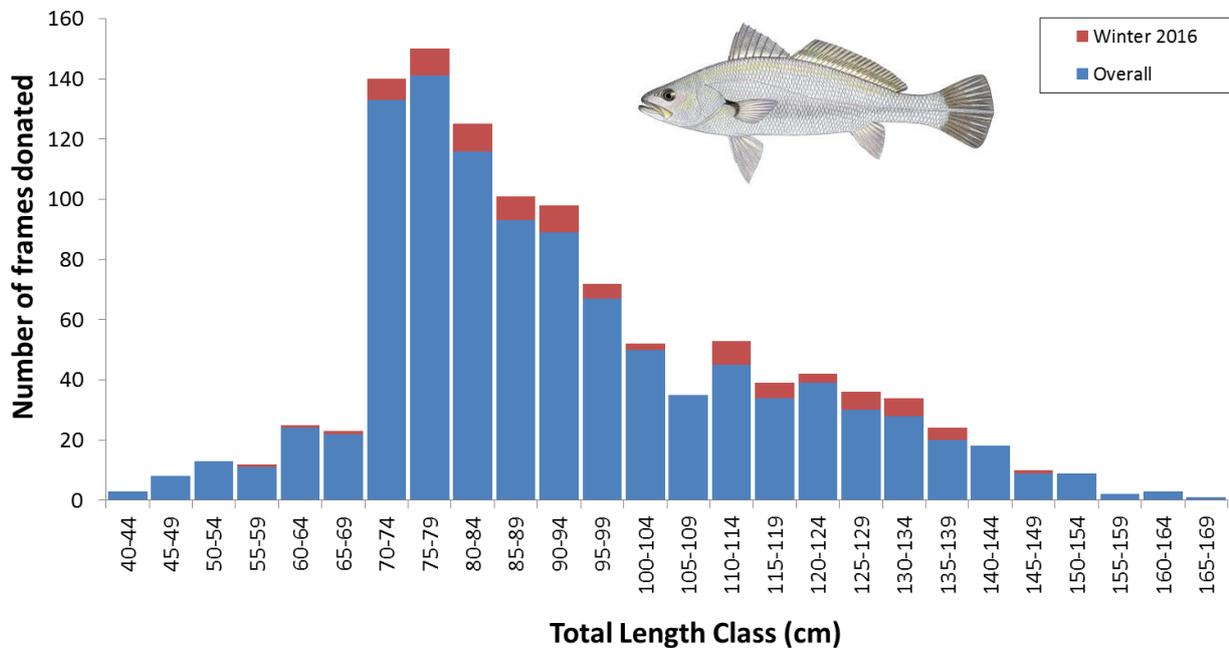
Another top season for all our species saw frames generously donated from 86 mulloway, 17 kingfish, 34 snapper, 18 dusky flathead and over 200 tailor! This fantastic effort from the state's recreational fishers brings the overall total numbers of mulloway frames donated to 1,114, kingfish to 155, dusky flathead to 32, snapper to 90, spotted mackerel to 66, Spanish mackerel to 36 and tailor to more than 400 frames – phew!

More than half the mulloway frames donated were from the fish between 70 and 100 cm – the size class most commonly encountered by rec anglers and spearos – again however the metre-plus models were well represented including 11 fish over 130 cm all the way up to a 146 cm brute from Port Stephens! This has been a feature of the frame donation component of the NSW RAP with the impressive numbers of large (and potentially old) fish donated making up a significant proportion of the overall total. This provides crucial data for monitoring the health of the mulloway stock in NSW.

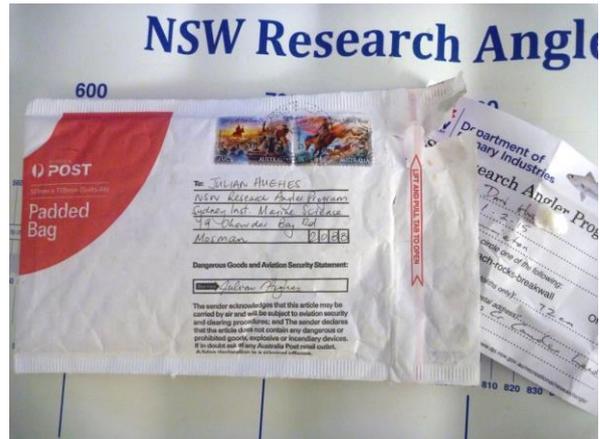


The heads from some of the 66 spotted mackerel donated to the NSW RAP defrosting in the lab. Remember, if you are going to donate a head (rather than a frame), you must include the length of the fish on the accompanying data label.

Lengths of mulloway donated to the NSW Research Angler Program in winter 2016 and overall since its commencement in September 2013.

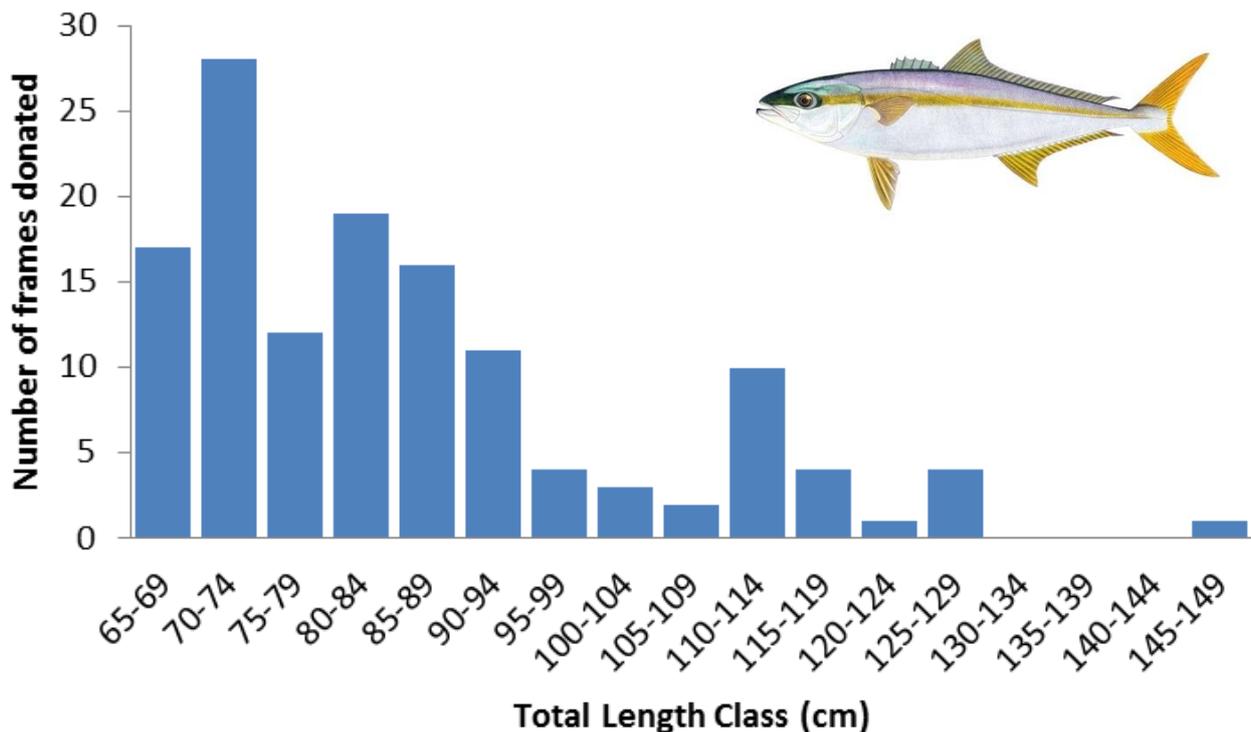


And don't forget that you can now post the jewels from your mulloway catches to us making donating to the program even easier! All you need to do is contact us at the NSW RAP (T: 9435 4671, E: research.angler@dpi.nsw.gov.au) and we will send you out a reply-paid padded post pack and data label. Then it's simply a matter of filling out the data label and placing it, along with a single jewel from your fish into the post pack (right), seal it, stick it in the nearest Australia Post box and let the postman do the rest! Even if you are an avid collector of jewie jewels as mementos of past mulloway conquests, the good news is we only need a single otolith from each fish – so you can now contribute vital information on the health of the mulloway stock and still keep a special reminder of a special fish.



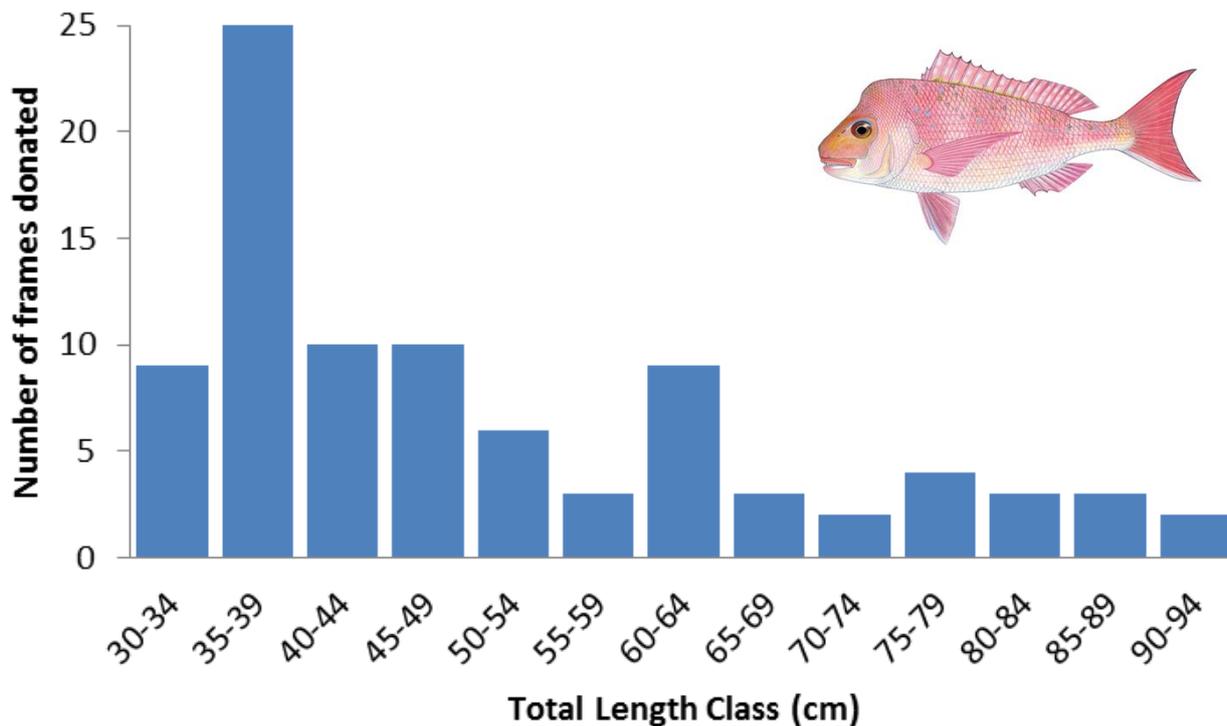
Below is a graph of the lengths of the very impressive total of 155 yellowtail kingfish donated to the NSW RAP to date. These brilliant inshore sportfish are famous for their dogged (and sometimes underhand) fighting qualities and deliciously flavoured flesh. They are revered by both angler and spearfishers alike and also have a history of heavy exploitation up until the mid-1990s when pelagic kingfish traps were banned. The below figure shows just how well the population has rebounded thanks to an amazing growth rate (and sensible legal length!). As with mulloway, the frames donated to the NSW RAP are mainly (66%) in the 65 to 90 cm size range, but excellent numbers of fish in larger size classes make an excellent contribution to the ongoing assessment of the stock of this popular and important fish species.

Lengths of yellowtail kingfish (*Seriola lalandi*) donated to the NSW Research Angler Program since their addition into the program in mid-2015.



And speaking of fish that are good to eat, snapper have also been donated in consistent numbers since their incorporation into the program in the middle of 2015 and as of this past winter we have had frames from almost 100 individuals donated. As with the other species mentioned above, most frames have come from just legal (>32 cm) fish, but 17 fish larger than 70 cm is as impressive as the data well will get from them! And just in case you're wondering where all these fish have been coming from, our leading snapper donor currently is Taigan Heath from Grafton with 40 frames donated!

Lengths of snapper (*Chrysophrys auratus*) donated to the NSW Research Angler Program since their addition into the program in mid-2015.



Taigan Heath with a lovely North Coast snapper – one of the 40 snapper Taigan has generously donated the frame of to the NSW RAP. Photo courtesy Taigan Heath.



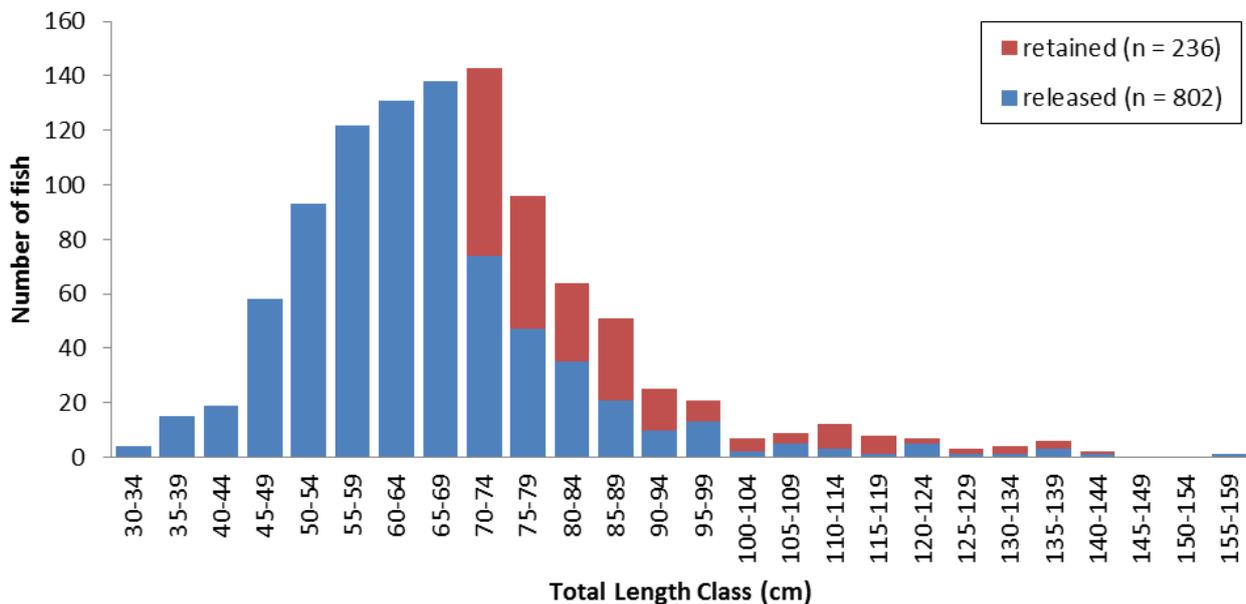
And here he is again! Taigan Heath this time with a lovely 119.5 cm North Coast kingy, the frame of which was also donated to the NSW RAP. Photo courtesy Taigan Heath.

Even if it is only one frame, one head, or a single jewel, we are willing to do (almost) anything to get it!

“Research Angler Diary” Component

Another group of diligent Research Angler Diarists dutifully sent in their diaries for analysis over winter 2016, bringing the number of mulloway measured as part of this component to more than 1,000 fish! The data presented here again shows that for the ‘experts’, catching mulloway isn’t that hard at all! The below figure summarises the lengths of mulloway retained, as well as those released, from more than 1,500 jewy fishing trips! Of the fish caught, most (70%) were smaller than the minimum legal length of 70 cm and therefore released, with most commonly caught fish of between 55 and 75 cm. Of the legal-sized fish caught, just 48% were kept, confirming that mulloway are valued for the challenge they present to catch as much as for their quality on the plate!

Lengths of mulloway recorded by “Research Angler Diarists” between April 2014 and August 2016.

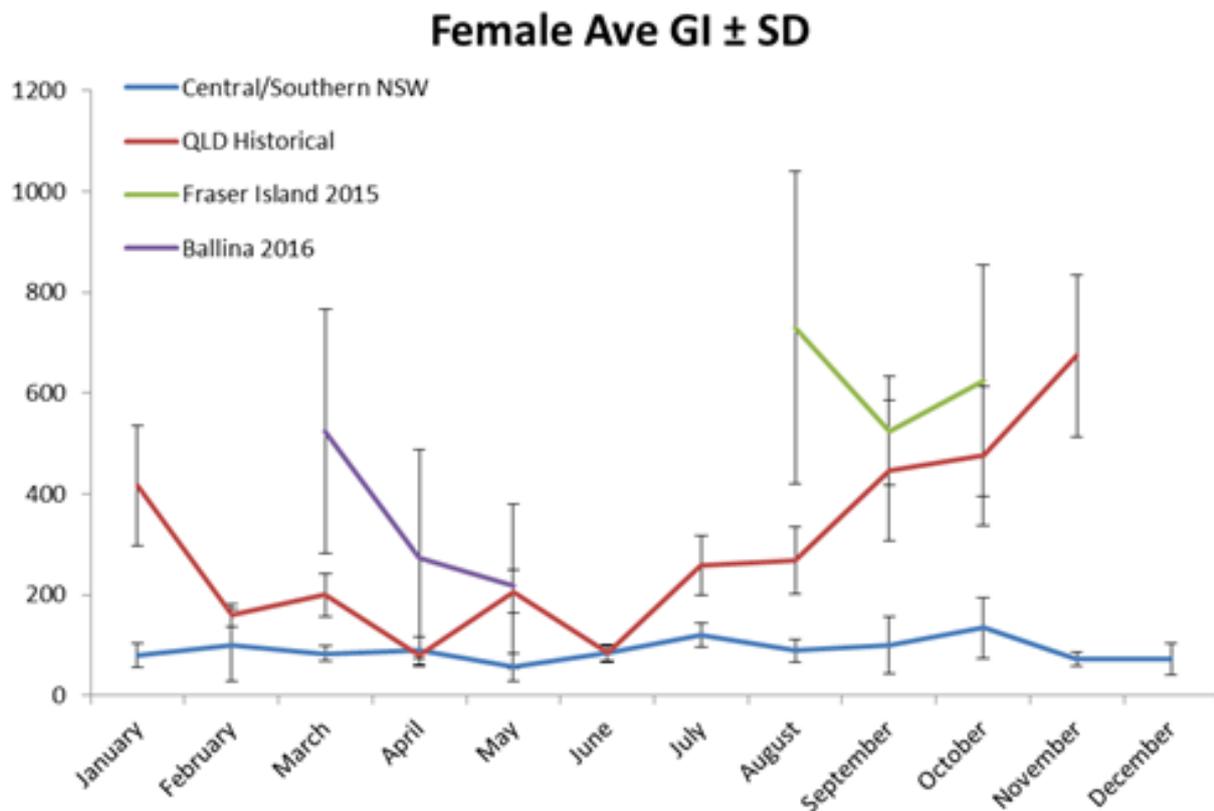


Once we receive the diary from a Research Angler Diarist, we digitise it immediately so that it can be returned to the fisher for further data collection. As you can see above, the data collected provides researchers and managers with the crucial estimate of the sizes of mulloway caught by recreational fishers so please keep filling out your Research Angler Diaries! If you have managed to misplace your reply-paid envelope, please contact us (T: 9435 4671, E: research.angler@dpi.nsw.gov.au) and we will get a new one out to you ASAP.

All Research Angler Diarists are provided with a small 20 page waterproof diary to record information from over 100 mulloway fishing trips along with a custom-made extra-long 160 cm NSW RAP fish measuring mat for you to accurately measure the lengths of the mulloway you catch (retained as well as released). If you regularly chase mulloway and would like to contribute some crucial data on the recreational mulloway fishery, please contact us (T: 9435 4671, E: research.angler@dpi.nsw.gov.au), and we will send you out a Research Angler Diary pack. This is an ongoing component of the NSW RAP so it’s never too late to get on board!

Tailor research update

The [Recreational Fishing Trust](#)-funded research project into the biology and fishery for tailor in NSW continues to be supplied with top quality samples collected by keen NSW Research Anglers. More than 400 tailor donated to the NSW RAP have been incorporated into the study to date and have already produced some very important results. Initial data on tailor spawning periods in NSW indicate that at least some spawning in northern NSW (Ballina) occurs at a different time of year (late summer-autumn) to that recording for fish collected from Fraser Island (winter-spring). Very little spawning activity appears to occur in central or southern NSW at all with the gonadosomatic index varying little throughout the year.



Annual trends in gonadosomatic indices (or GSI for short) for tailor collected from various locations and time periods. GSI is calculated by dividing the weight of the gonads by the whole weight of the fish and is an excellent guide to the reproductive period of a species.

Researchers from UNSW and Fisheries NSW also attended the [2016 Lions Greenback Charity Tailor Fishing Competition](#) on 11-12 June at Cabarita Beach on the NSW North Coast. This was the 30th year of the fantastic event organised by the [Cabarita Beach Pottsville Beach Lions Club](#) and attracted tailor hunters from far and wide to fish the gutters from Ballina up to Tweed Heads. We were indeed fortunate to be involved in such an excellent competition and resulted in collection of samples from some 20 fish including the competition winning “greenback” – a 3.9 kg fish caught by Kerry Bussian. Many thanks to the organisers for fitting us into their very special comp and to the competitors for generously donating the data from their fish to research. See you all again next year!

And speaking of thanks, once again a special mention must be made of the incredibly dedicated efforts of the [Australian Surfcaster](#) group who have caught and donated a large proportion of the recreationally-caught fish to this study. The information we are getting from these samples are absolutely invaluable, but we always need more, so if you pick up a few choppers, or even an elbow-slapping “greenback” over spring, please drop the frame into one of our participating drop-off locations (or contact research.angler@dpi.nsw.gov.au, (02) 9435 4671) to contribute to this essential research being carried out by Fisheries NSW and UNSW scientists. Stay tuned for further updates on the progress of fascinating project in future NSW RAP newsletters.



The ovaries from an August-caught North Coast tailor showing the hydrated eggs indicative of an imminent spawning event. Photo courtesy Ben Van der Woude



Above: A pair of corking North Coast tailor caught by [Australian Surfcaster's](#) Andrew Argyrou and donated to the NSW RAP over winter 2016. Photo courtesy Ben Van der Woude.

Right: UNSW PhD candidate Hayden Schilling delicately removes the otoliths from one of 20 tailor weighed in at the 30th Lions Greenback Tailor Fishing Competition in June.





2016 Greenback Tailor Champion Kerry Bussian and a thumping 3.9 kg fish, the otoliths of which were generously donated to research. Photo courtesy Cabarita Pottsville Lions Club.



NSW Research Angler Program researcher Antony Gould addresses the thousand strong crowd assembled at the Greenback Tailor Fishing Comp. Photo courtesy Hayden Schilling.

Hairtail research

Winter can be a slow time for many species in NSW, but there's one very enigmatic beast that really comes into its own at this time of year. The Largehead Hairtail (*Trichiurus lepturus*) literally appears from nowhere in selected and sometimes unexpected places of the NSW coast, and often in the death of winter. These mysterious creatures are currently the subject of a joint research effort between scientists from the University of Western Sydney and Fisheries NSW. Part of this research involved attending the [2016 Hairtail Social](#) – a fantastic 3 day fishing comp on the mighty Hawkesbury River organised by the [Fishraider](#) crew. Over a brilliant (if cold) three days, researchers were the recipients of some 89 hairtail frames and heads from fish up to a thumping 157 cm in length caught during the comp!



Nice teeth! Fisheries NSW scientist Caitlin Young with one of 89 hairtail caught at the 2016 Hairtail Social.



The otolith section from a 119 cm hairtail estimated to be 4 years old. Photo courtesy Chantelle Clain.

Many thanks to the organisers of the Hairtail Social for getting us involved in such an excellent event and to the passionate mid-winter hairtailers for generously donating their catches to research. Stay tuned for updates on the progress of this overdue and much-needed research into the biology and fishery for this iconic and mysterious fish species in future NSW RAP newsletters.



University of Western Sydney Masters student Chantelle Clain interviews a competitor at the 2016 Hairtail Social. Photo courtesy [Fishraider](#).



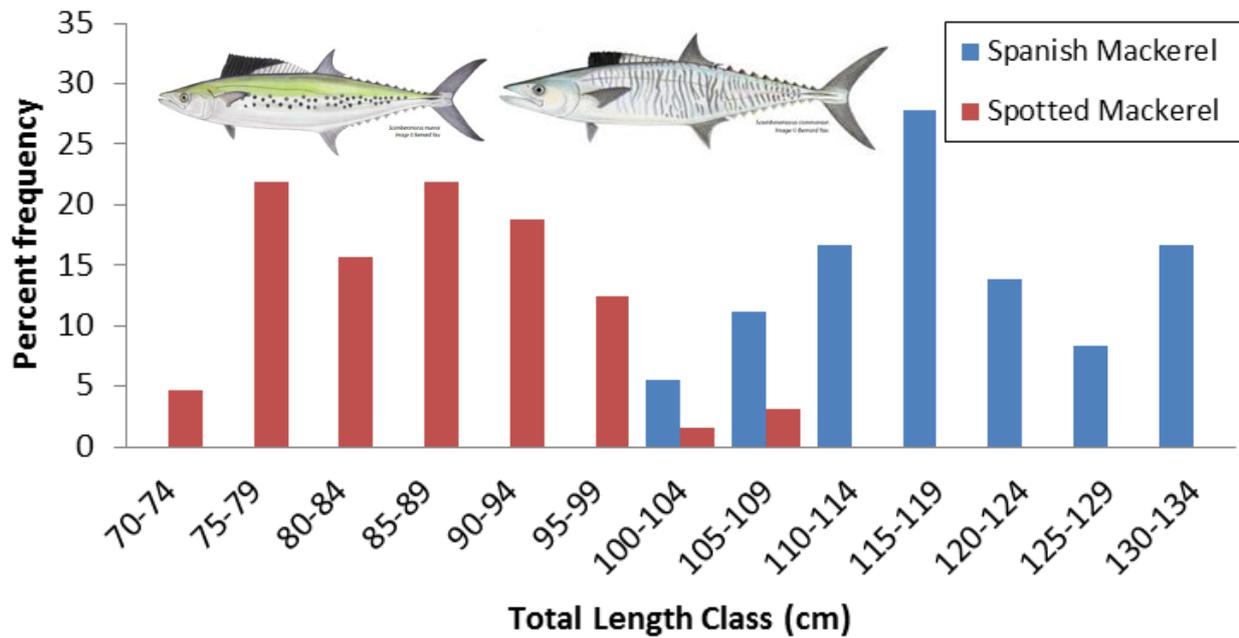
Hairtail Social organiser Donna Barton with a lovely Hawkesbury River hairtail. Photo courtesy [Fishraider](#).

NSW RAP mackerel donations!

Well, that's it for another mackerel season in northern NSW and our mackerel Research Anglers did pretty damn well in contributing more than 100 mackerel heads and frames to the NSW RAP to be used in a joint East Coast stock assessment for both species with our friends from the [Queensland Department of Agriculture & Fisheries](#).

Frames from some 36 Spanish mackerel (*Scomberomorus commerson*) ranged from 103 to 133 cm in length with most fish caught in the 115-120 cm size class – seriously solid fish! Spotted mackerel (*S. munroi*) are a slightly smaller species, but what they lack in size were more than made up for in numbers with frames from 66 individuals donated. Good numbers of spotties of all size classes came through the lab in addition to several metre-plus fish, which is right up there with the maximum recorded size for the species. A great mackerel season and a great start for the newest two species to the NSW Research Angler Program.

Lengths of Spanish (*Scomberomorus commerson*) and spotted mackerel (*S. munroi*) donated to the NSW Research Angler Program over the 2015-16 mackerel season.



The grisly but delicate task of removing the otolith from one of 36 Spanish mackerel donated to the NSW RAP prior to processing and age estimation.



The otoliths from the fish at left are carefully rinsed in freshwater and dried before being sent “north of the border” to be incorporated into an East Coast stock assessment.

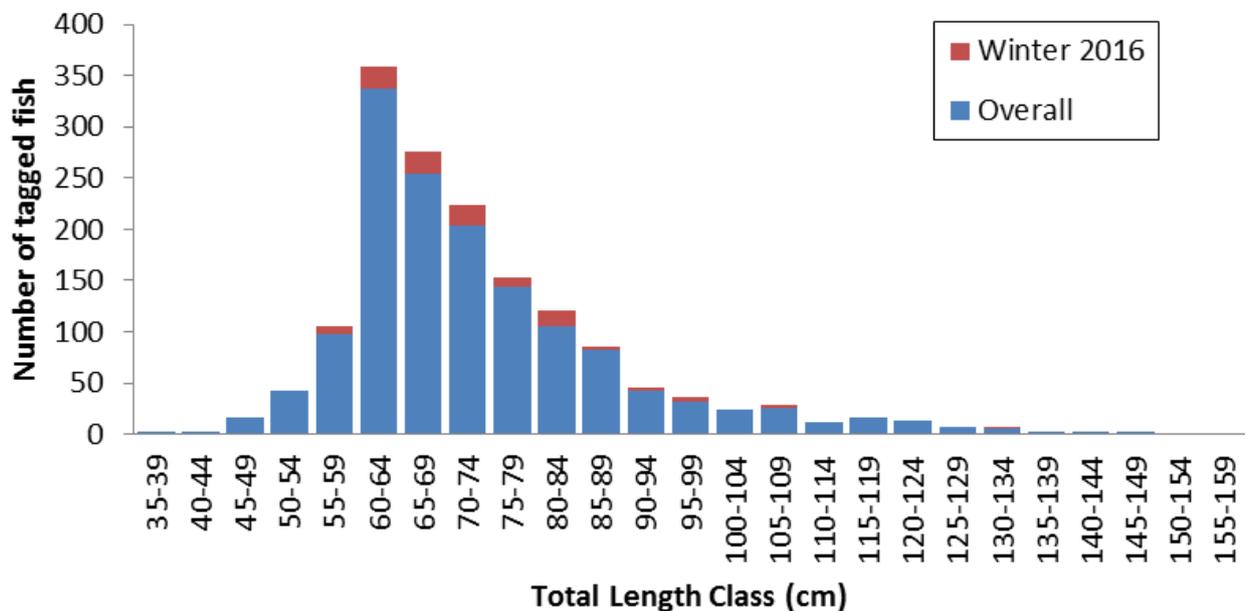
As with our other species, mackerel frames (or heads) can be donated to the NSW RAP at any of our participating [drop-off points](#). All data collected will contribute to the joint assessment of the East Coast stocks of these two awesome fish species in collaboration with the [Queensland Department of Agriculture & Fisheries](#).

NSW RAP – ANSA Tagging Project Update

The NSW RAP-ANSA mulloway tagging project powered on through yet another winter with a further 111 mulloway tagged by 23 dedicated taggers. The winter 2016 tagging effort brings the current overall number of tagged jewies swimming around out there to almost 1600 fish – an awesome effort! Winter's tagged fish again built on a well-established pattern of fish in the 60 to 75 cm range along with a sprinkling of larger models right up to a 131 cm fish from the Bellinger River!

And don't forget, you can also now stay up-to-date with all the comings and goings of this component of the NSW RAP by visiting the project Facebook page ([Newtag – NSW Tagging Program – Mulloway](#)).

Length frequency of mulloway tagged as part of the NSW RAP-ANSA tagging project in winter 2016 and overall since its commencement March 2014.



Once again, many of the fish tagged over winter came from the estuaries of metro Sydney with our number one tagger for winter, Tom Crittenden, managing to tag at least one fish from each of the Cooks, Georges, Lane Cove and Parramatta Rivers! Also up there again in the “Top Five” for winter were familiar names in Ivan Maric with 18 fish, Peter Rothwell with 17 and Gianni Lo Giudice with 12 jewies from ‘the big smoke’. In the fresh air out of Sydney, Mark Saxon from [Castaway Estuary Fishing Charters](#) and clients tagged seven fish in and around the Port Macquarie region up to 81 cm!

Top Five taggers for winter 2016 (as of 31 August 2016):

Tagger	No. fish tagged	Region
Tom Crittenden	23	Sydney
Ivan Maric	18	Sydney
Peter Rothwell	17	Sydney
Gianni Lo Guidice	12	Sydney
Mark Saxon	7	Port Macquarie

Top Five taggers overall (as of 31 August 2016):

Tagger	No. fish tagged	Region
Chris Cleaver	250	Everywhere!
Ivan Maric	125	Sydney
Dan Selby	111	Sydney
Mark Pirie	90	Yamba
Paul Blade	85	Coffs Harbour
Peter Rothwell	80	Sydney



Writing about the exploits of “Tagger 86” seems to be a recurring theme in these newsletters, but once again this mulloway hunter extraordinaire had another extraordinary season tagging three of the “Top Five” largest winter mulloway. At 108, 105.5 and 99 cm, these 10+ kg Hawkesbury fish are not easy to catch, unless of course you are “Tagger 86”! Lachlan Monro only managed to tag a single fish through winter 2016, but what a fish to tag at 131 cm! This absolute horse from the Bellinger River brings Lachlan’s tally of tagged fish to 5. Also adding to their tally of tagged fish over winter was Luke Reilly with five fish up to 105 cm from Brisbane Water. Another fantastic effort from all the fishers involved in this component of the NSW RAP.

Another happy [Sydney Sportfishing Adventures](#) client with a lovely tagged Hawkesbury mulloway just prior to release back into the river. Photo courtesy Dan Selby

Top Five largest fish tagged for winter 2016 (as of 31 August 2016):

Tagger	Total length (cm)	System
Lachlan Monro	131	Bellinger River
"Tagger 86"	108	Hawkesbury River
"Tagger 86"	105.5	Hawkesbury River
Luke Reilly	105	Brisbane Water
"Tagger 86"	99	Hawkesbury River

Top Five largest fish tagged overall (as of 31 August 2016):

Tagger	Total length (cm)	System	Season
"Tagger 86"	155.5	Hawkesbury River	Autumn 2016
"Tagger 86"	152	Hawkesbury River	Spring 2015
"Tagger 86"	147	Hawkesbury River	Spring 2015
"Tagger 86"	145	Hawkesbury River	Spring 2015
Dan Selby	144	Hawkesbury River	Winter 2014



Mulloway hunter extraordinaire Kyle Worley with a tagged winter mulloway – one of the 63 fish he has so far tagged from Lake Macquarie. Photo courtesy Kyle Worley.



111 cm of tagged winter mulloway recaptured by local young gun Luke Reilly in the Hawkesbury River. Photo courtesy Luke Reilly.

Another 13 tagged mulloway were recaptured over winter 2016 bringing the total number of recaps since the commencement of this enormously popular component of the NSW RAP in March 2014 to 111!

Interestingly, yet more tagged mulloway were recaptured in the Hunter region over winter that had been tagged further south. A 106.5 cm fish tagged by Jack Freestone in Brisbane Water in October 2015 was recaptured by Matt Baldwin 259 days later in Newcastle. Yet another of Dan Selby's 100 plus mulloway tagged from the Hawkesbury River in November 2014 at 63.5 cm was recaptured in Port Stephens by Ben Doolan. We were also fortunate to receive the frame from this fish so were able to estimate its age at 4 years old when it was recaptured 566 days later when 87 cm in length!



Todd Chown with a freshly tagged Hawkesbury mulloway – one of 5 fish Todd and mates tagged this past winter. Photo courtesy Todd Chown.



Matthew Forrest with 105 cm of recaptured mulloway from Brisbane Water – tagged by Luke Reilly 22 days earlier. Photo courtesy Matthew Forrest.

Some slightly more local movements were also revealed by winter recaptures with a 64 cm fish tagged by Abdullah Atlihan in the Hawkesbury River recaptured 405 days later in Botany Bay by Dean McErean. Another was a tagged fish which was caught by Bill Duncan in Botany Bay in July which had been originally caught 438 days earlier in Port Hacking by Andrew Talbot when 71 cm. Whilst these recaptures demonstrate that mulloway definitely do move between estuaries, sometimes over 100s of km, most recaptures so far have occurred in the same estuary system as initial tagging. All our other recaptures over winter confirmed this trend, despite some serious time between tag and recapture. Peter Rothwell's 78 cm Hawkesbury River fish spent 423 days at liberty before being recaptured by Luke Reilly 83.5 cm and Brad Gibson's 51 cm fish was 'doing what jewies do' around Thirroul for 309 days before being caught again by Simon Morley.



107 cm of prime Stockton mulloway tagged (top) and recaptured (below) by Scott Purnell within the space of just 17 days! Photo courtesy Scott Purnell.



Tag #A599582 originally placed in a 60 cm Parramatta River mulloway by Seamus McCleave and recaptured 221 days later by Marco Monaco at 78 cm. Photo courtesy Marco Monaco.

Once again, winter recaptures also revealed the impressive growth rates mulloway are capable of, especially when young. A 75 cm fish tagged by Mick Leavey in the Clarence River in winter last year was recaptured in winter this year growing an amazing 19 cm in 434 days when recaptured by Mark Karstens. Even faster growing was a Parramatta River fish tagged by Seamus McCleave at 60 cm which grew 18 cm in just 224 days before being recaptured by Marco Monaco in August!



Champion female angler Chloe Laurence with 83 cm of smashing Coffs Harbour snapper caught at the 2016 [Dave Irvine Memorial Snapper Classic](#) just prior to release. Photo courtesy Chloe Laurence.



Afternoon colours on another quality snapper tagged at the 2016 [Dave Irvine Memorial Snapper Classic](#) by Team NEWTAG. Photo courtesy NEWTAG.

The NSW RAP-ANSA Tagging Project also made a brief foray into tagging a few snapper at one of Australia's premier catch and release fishing tournaments at the 2016 [Dave Irvine Memorial Snapper Classic](#) in August. Some great winter weather and very capable anglers resulted in more than 70 snapper being tagged and released with a largest fish of a whopping 83 cm! Stay tuned for a full summary on the tagging activities of NSW RAP-ANSA at the Dave Irvine Classic in the spring 2016 edition of the NSW RAP newsletter.



An 87 cm 4 year old fish caught by Ben Doolan in Port Stephens on June 3, previously tagged by [Sydney Sportfishing Adventures](#) Dan Selby in the Hawkesbury River some 566 days earlier on 15 November 2014 when just 63.5 cm in length. Photo courtesy Paul Lennon

Tagged mulloway recaptures for winter 2016 (as of 31 August 2016):

Tagging angler	Total length (cm)	Tagging location	Recapture angler	Recapture location	Total length (cm)	Days at liberty
Jack Freestone	106.5	Brisbane Water	Matt Baldwin	Newcastle	107	259
Abdullah Atlihan	64	Hawkesbury River	Dean McErlean	Botany Bay	73	405
Brad Gibson	51	Thirroul	Simon Morley	Thirroul	64	309
Andrew Talbot	71	Port Hacking	Bill Duncan	Botany Bay	84	438
			Luke Reilly	Hawkesbury River	111	
Peter Rothwell	78	Hawkesbury River	Luke Reilly	Hawkesbury River	83.5	423
Seamus McCleave	60	Parramatta River	Marco Monaco	Parramatta River	78	224
			Trent Fahey	Seal Rocks	71	
			Scott Purnell	Hunter River	63	
Mick Leavey	75	Clarence River	Mark Karstens	Clarence River	94	434
Luke Reilly	105	Brisbane Water	Matthew Forrest	Brisbane Water	105	22
Kyle Worley	72	Lake Macquarie	Peter Richardson	Lake Macquarie	80	234
Dan Selby	63.5	Hawkesbury River	Ben Doolan	Port Stephens	87	566

Next time you're out chasing mulloway, keep an eye out for one of our yellow NSW DPI tags. Remember that the tag may be fouled with algae like this one from an 87 cm fish recaptured after 566 days at liberty.



If you are fortunate enough to catch a tagged mulloway, please record the tag number, measure the length of the fish, and contact either the NSW DPI Gamefish Tagging Program (T: 4424 7411, E: gamefish.tagging@dpi.nsw.gov.au) or the NSW Research Angler Program (T: 9435 4671, E: research.angler@dpi.nsw.gov.au). The tag will be yellow, approximately 12 cm long and located just beneath the dorsal spines.

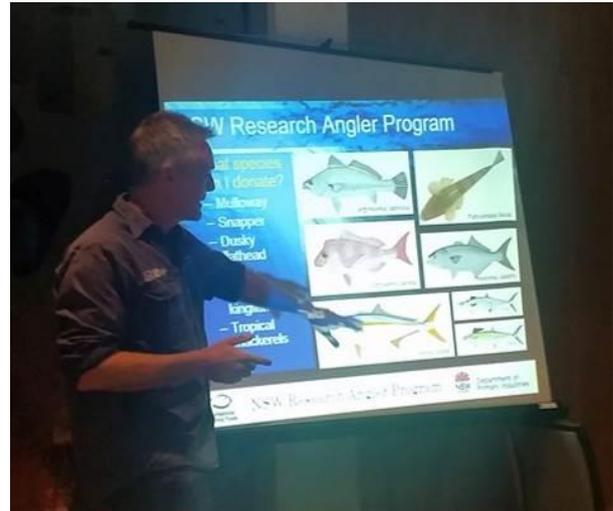
The crucial data collected by this project will help us to learn more about the movements, growth and post-release survival of this iconic fish. Stay tuned for future updates in the Spring 2016 NSW RAP Newsletter!

Once again, an enormous thank you must go to the [ANSA NSW Branch](#), and in particular **Stan Konstantaras** and **Chris Anagnostou**, for managing this important and fascinating component of the NSW Research Angler Program.

NSW RAP Presentations

If you are a member of a fishing club (spearfishing or angling) or a tackle shop hosting regular fishing-related presentations and are interested in having someone from the NSW RAP give a talk on the program (and we now have a bunch more species to talk about!), please don't hesitate to get in contact with us (E: research.angler@dpi.nsw.gov.au, T: 9435 4671) and we will send someone out to get you and your audience 'revved-up' about the program!

Right: NSW RAP scientist Julian Hughes makes a presentation at the monthly meeting of the [Northern Suburbs Underwater Club](#). Photo courtesy Adam Price.



The “Top Fives”!

Our sincerest thanks to the following dedicated mulloway Research Anglers and spearfishers who have made it into our “Top Five” lists of frame donors overall and those for winter 2016.

A great winter of mulloway-chasing around Lake Macquarie saw seasoned campaigner Peter Richardson our number one frame donor with ten cracking mulloway to 92 cm donated over winter 2016. In the same region, Ben Doolan added six from Port Stephens to his already impressive tally including a 139 cm fish estimated to be 19 years old! Greg Slater provided our first mulloway frames donated from the NSW Far South Coast with his five fish coming from one of the more difficult paces to catch a jewy, Eden, including a 133 cm fish estimated to be 25 years old! Fishing journo Andrew Mayo sent us jewels from five fish taken in his new backyard of Iluka including a super-fast growing 136 cm fish estimated to be just 10 years old! Check out a great article written by Andrew concerning these five fish in the latest edition of [FishLife magazine](#). Scott Robson’s five from Newcastle and Kevin Buhler’s five from Coffs Harbour rounded out yet another great season of mulloway chasing along the entire length of the NSW coast!

“Top Five” donors winter 2016 (as of 31 August 2016):

Donor	No. frames donated	Region
Peter Richardson	10	Lake Macquarie
Ben Doolan	6	Port Stephens
Greg Slater	5	Eden
Kevin Buhler	5	Coffs Harbour
Andrew Mayo	5	Iluka
Scott Robson	5	Newcastle

“Top Five” donors overall (as of 31 August 2016):

Donor	No. frames donated	Region
Paul Blade	64	Coffs Harbour
James Sakker	35	Coffs Harbour
David Birt	34	Newcastle
Kyle Worley	23	Lake Macquarie
Murat Atlihan	23	Sydney

“Top Five” largest fish donated and associated ages winter 2016 (as of 31 August 2016):

Donor	Total length (cm)	Estimated age (years)	Region
Jessica Slow	146	20	Port Stephens
Ben Doolan	139	19	Port Stephens
Wade Benson	136	14	Newcastle
Andrew Mayo	136	10	Iluka
Scott Robson	135	10	Newcastle

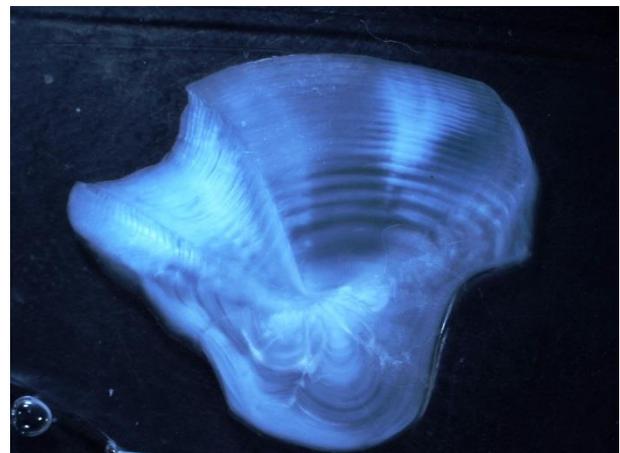
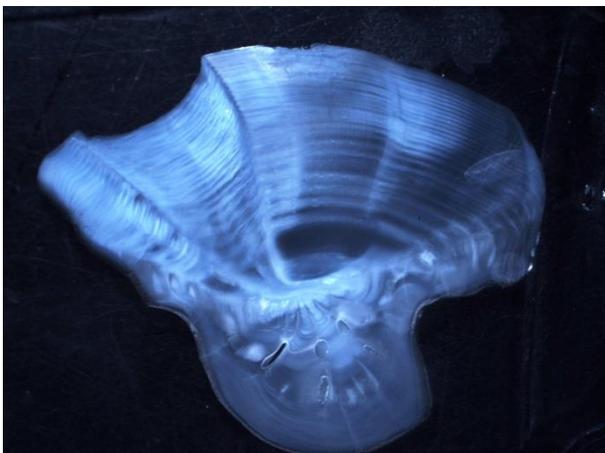
“Top Five” largest mulloway donated and associated ages overall (as of 31 August 2016):

Donor	Total length (cm)	Estimated age (years)	Region	Season
Nathan Debono	168	26	Newcastle	Winter 2015
Adam Price	164	24	Sydney	Spring 2013
Keith Kneebone	160	20	Sydney	Autumn 2014
Mark McCabe	159	21	Sydney	Spring 2013
Sal Nahle	158	18	Sydney	Autumn 2016

Jessica Slow’s thumping Port Stephens fish was not only the largest mulloway we had donated to the NSW RAP over winter 2016 at 146 cm, but it was also the third oldest at an estimated 20 years, making it just the sixth 20 year old mulloway so far recorded from NSW waters. Only slightly smaller at 139 cm and one year younger at an estimated 19 years old was another Port Stephens trophy donated by Ben Doolan. These are impressive ages, even for mulloway of this size, but not compared to a couple of seriously old jewies donated from the comparatively cooler waters of the NSW Far South Coast. Greg Slater’s 133 cm fish from Eden was estimated to be 25 years old – only the second 25 year old mulloway recorded in NSW to date. Another Eden fish caught by Jack Graham was almost as old at 24 years and almost as rare being just the fifth fish of this age. The impressive ages of these two fish have put them in the “Top Five” list of oldest fish donated overall since the commencement of the program! Another rare fish was a 128 cm Coffs Harbour beauty speared by Rachel Vercoe estimated to be the extremely grand age of 17 years! Cracking big jewies, but with far more conservative ages were Wade Benson’s 136 cm 14 year old Newcastle fish, Andrew Mayo’s 136 cm 10 year old from Iluka and another 10 year old, Scott Robson’s 135 cm fish also from Newcastle.

“Top Five” oldest fish donated and associated lengths winter 2016 (as of 31 August 2016):

Donor	Estimated age (years)	Total length (cm)	Region
Greg Slater	25	133	Eden
Jack Graham	24	<i>Unknown</i>	Eden
Jessica Slow	20	146	Port Stephens
Ben Doolan	19	136	Port Stephens
Rachel Vercoe	17	128	Coffs Harbour



Oldies but goodies: The otolith sections from a pair of seriously old Eden mulloway donated to the NSW RAP over winter. At left is Greg Slater’s 25 year old and at right is Jack Graham’s 24 year old.



126.5 cm of prime Coffs Harbour silver donated by gun spearo James Sakker – one of 35 frames James has so far donated to the NSW RAP. Photo courtesy James Sakker.



Ben Van der Woude with a real horse of a North Coast 'greenback' tailor donated to the NSW RAP from July. Photo courtesy Australian Surfcaster.

“Top Five” oldest fish donated and associated lengths overall (as of 31 August 2016):

Donor	Estimated age (years)	Total length (cm)	Region	Season
Vaughan Little	34	156	Nowra	Spring 2013
Scott Robson	26	154	Newcastle	Summer 2013-14
Evan Leeson	26	144	Port Macquarie	Autumn 2014
Nathan Debono	26	168	Newcastle	Winter 2015
Marwan Nasr	25	147	Sydney	Spring 2014
Greg Slater	25	133	Eden	Winter 2016
Adam Price	24	164	Sydney	Spring 2013
Jack Graham	24	<i>Unknown</i>	Eden	Winter 2016
Hari Corliss	24	151	Port Macquarie	Winter 2015
Robert Thorpe	23	137	Newcastle	Autumn 2014
Mark Pirie	23	140	Yamba	Autumn 2014

As well as those mentioned above, thanks to all the fishers who donated their winter **mulloway**, **yellowtail kingfish**, **dusky flathead**, **snapper**, **mackerel** and **tailor** to the NSW RAP, here's hoping for a quality spring of fishing for all our species!



Research Angler Diarist Adam Barnes and 105 cm of winter lure-crunching mulloway from Ballina. Photo courtesy Adam Barnes.

Drop-off Locations

Many thanks must once again go to all participating drop-off locations for their enthusiastic involvement in the program. This program would simply not be possible without your continued support.

For the full and up-to-date list of places where you can drop-off your frames, heads or jewels, please visit:

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/recreational/researchangler/drop-off-locations>

Monthly Prize Draw Winners!

The lucky monthly NSW Research Angler Program prize winners for winter 2016 were decided by randomly drawing one frame donor from each month.

Congratulations to the following Research Anglers:

June	Peter Richardson	(Lake Macquarie)
July	Craig Black	(Brisbane Water)
August	Mark Pirie	(Yamba)



Each winner will receive either:

- a \$50 gift voucher generously donated by [MO Tackle Coffs Harbour](#) (for use in-store or online),
- or a mullet-ready lure pack worth \$50 containing a selection of proven hardbody, soft plastic and blade-style mullet-catchers from Storm, Killalure, Berkley and Rupes.

Future winners will be published in upcoming newsletters and on our website. Don't forget to include your contact details (phone number, postal or email address) on the label accompanying your donated frame to ensure your chance of winning!

Remember, if you're going to catch and keep any of our species (**Mullett, Snapper, Dusky Flathead, Yellowtail Kingfish, Tailor, Spotted or Spanish Mackerel**) for a feed, please fillet your fish and donate the frame, head or a single otolith to research –

WE NEED THE DATA FROM YOUR FISH!

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT.
KIND REGARDS AND HAPPY FISHING!**

The NSW Research Angler Program is part of the Resource Assessment & Monitoring Unit of the Fisheries NSW Research Branch and is generously funded by the NSW Saltwater Recreational Fishing Trust and the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

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