

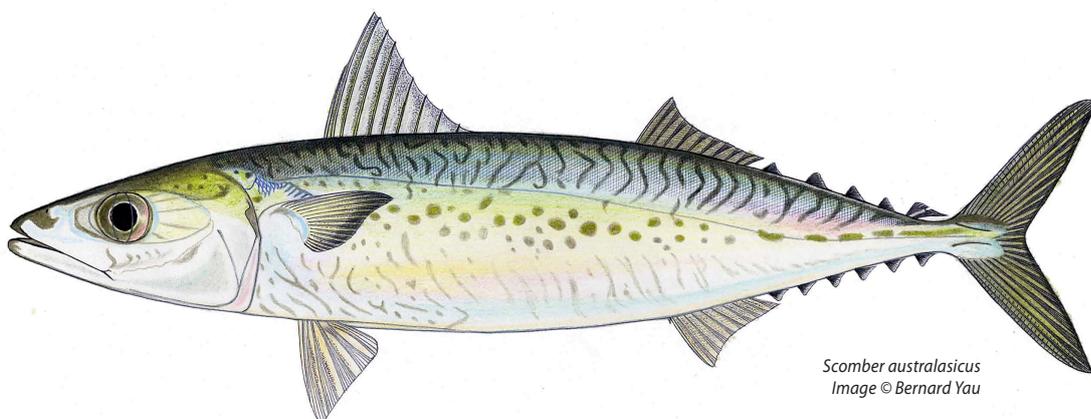
Blue Mackerel

(*Scomber australasicus*)

EXPLOITATION STATUS MODERATELY FISHED

Overall the stock off NSW is believed to be moderately fished, but there may be localised depletions.

SCIENTIFIC NAME	STANDARD NAME	COMMENT
<i>Scomber australasicus</i>	blue mackerel	Also known as slimy mackerel



Scomber australasicus
Image © Bernard Yau

Background

Blue mackerel (*Scomber australasicus*) occur in sub-tropical and temperate waters of the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Blue mackerel occur off all states of Australia except the NT. The species inhabits inshore and continental shelf waters, with older fish occurring further offshore.

In the last decade there has been considerable research into the biology and stock assessment of blue mackerel. Blue mackerel grow relatively quickly, reaching approximately 17-22 cm fork length (FL) after one year. They reach a maximum age of about 7 years and length of 50 cm. Blue mackerel mature at about 24-28 cm FL and spawning takes place during late winter and spring in outer continental shelf waters off northern NSW and southern QLD. Off NSW the oldest fish occur offshore, beyond state waters, and are targeted by Commonwealth licensed purse seine and mid-water trawl fishers. In 2008/09 Commonwealth fishers landed about 2,000 tonnes of blue mackerel.

Relatively young (less than 2 years old) blue mackerel are caught by the Ocean Hauling Fishery in purse seine nets. Smaller quantities are also taken in bait nets (which are modified hauling nets) and general purpose hauling nets. Similar catch levels occur in all months of the year.

Commercial landings of blue mackerel since the mid 1980s have generally been between 300 and 500 tonnes annually but show considerable fluctuations. These fluctuations are likely to reflect changes in stock availability due to recruitment variability and may also reflect changes in the distribution of fish due to oceanographic processes.

Additional Notes

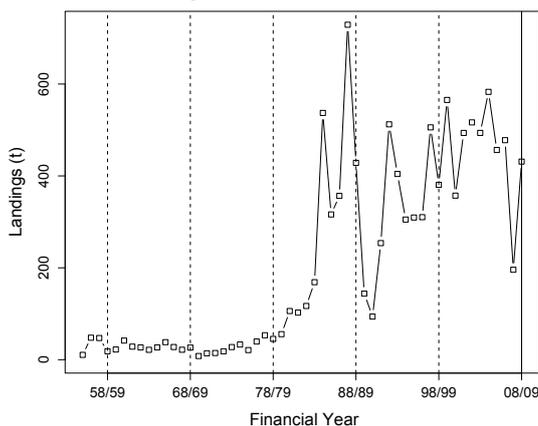
- South Australian Research and Development Institute have provided a biomass estimate based on a daily egg-production model of 25,000-33,000 t off the east coast of Australia. (Ward and Rogers, 2007).
- The minimum recreational catch off NSW is likely to be in the order of 90 t, while annual commercial landings off NSW have recently been around 500 t. Additional quantities are utilised by both recreational and commercial fishers as 'bait for own use'.
- Commonwealth assessments do not consider the species to be overfished nor subject to overfishing (Wilson *et al.* 2009).
- There is a recreational bag limit of 50 blue mackerel.
- Considerable quantities also taken for bait by tuna fishers (under permit).

Catch

Recreational Catch of Blue Mackerel

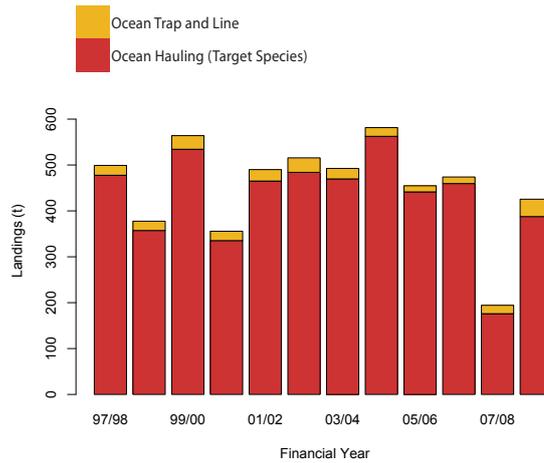
The annual recreational harvest of blue mackerel in NSW is likely to lie between 90 and 200 t. This estimate is based upon the results of the offsite National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey (Henry and Lyle, 2003) and onsite surveys undertaken by I & I NSW.

Historical Landings of Blue Mackerel



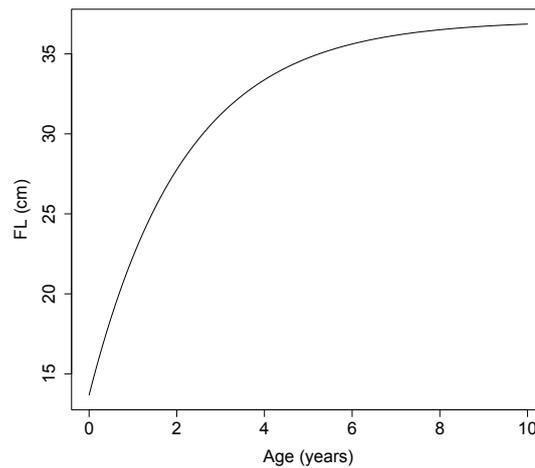
Commercial landings (including available historical records) of blue mackerel for NSW from 1955/56 to 2008/09 for all fishing methods. Landings were low until the commencement of purse seining in the 1980s.

Landings by Commercial Fishery of Blue Mackerel



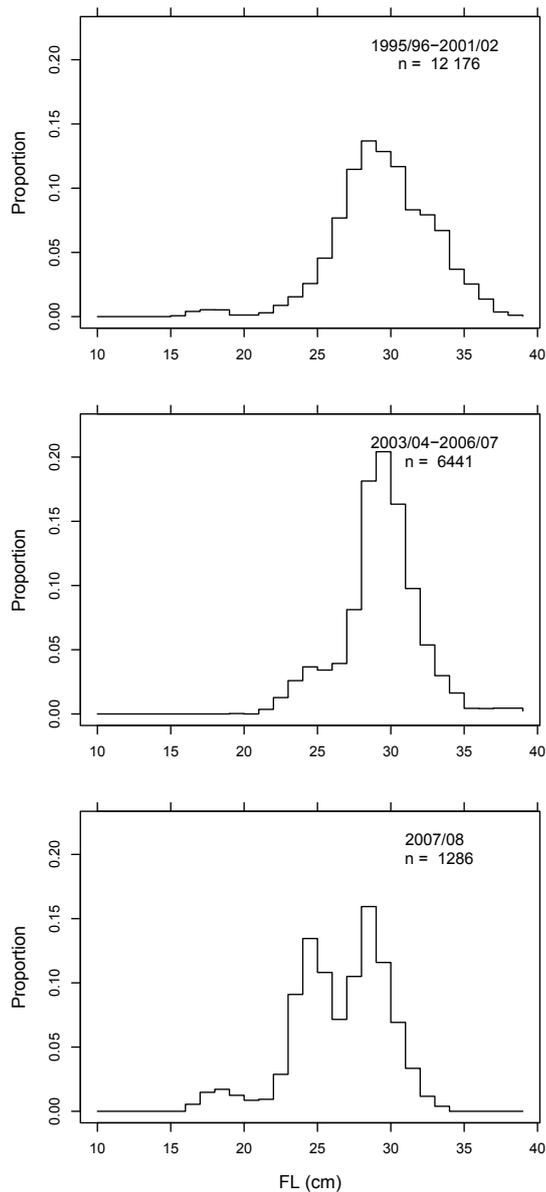
Reported landings of blue mackerel by NSW commercial fisheries from 1997/98. Fisheries which contribute less than 2.5% of the landings are excluded for clarity and privacy.

Growth Curve of Blue Mackerel



Growth curve for blue mackerel (Ward and Rogers, 2007). Lengths are presented as fork length (FL).

Length Frequency of Blue Mackerel



The length distribution of blue mackerel landed by NSW commercial purse seine fishers is comprised mainly of fish between 25 and 35 cm FL and has remained relatively stable in recent years. There is no minimum legal length for blue mackerel in NSW.

Further Reading

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- Lowry, M., A. Steffe and D. Williams (2006). Relationships between bait collection, bait type and catch: A comparison of the NSW trailer-boat and gamefish-tournament fisheries. *Fisheries Research* **78** (2-3): 266-275.
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Wilson, D., R. Curtotti, G. Begg and K. Phillips (Eds.) (2009). Fishery Status Reports 2008: status of fish stocks and fisheries managed by the Australian Government. Canberra, Bureau of Rural Sciences & Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics.

Please visit the CSIRO website, <http://www.marine.csiro.au/caab/> and search for the species code (CAAB) 37 441001, common name or scientific name to find further information.