Royal Red Prawn (Haliporoides sibogae)

**Exploration Status**

**LIGHTLY FISHED**

The limited targeting of this species and the recent decline in landings is associated with the low market price received for this species.

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<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
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<td>Haliporoides sibogae</td>
<td>royal red prawn</td>
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**Background**

The royal red prawn (Haliporoides sibogae) is a deepwater species recorded from both the east and west coasts of Australia. In the west it ranges from about Perth northwards across the North West Shelf to Indonesia. The eastern population extends from south east Queensland to waters east of Bass Strait. The two populations are probably distinct with the eastern form currently recognised as a subspecies (H. sibogae australiensis).

The royal red prawn is a demersal species inhabiting soft substrates along the upper continental shelf. Off NSW, it has been found in depths between 230 and 825 m but is most abundant in 400-550 m. Females grow larger than males, having a maximum carapace length (CL) of almost 5 cm and weighing more than 40 g; males reach a maximum of about 3.5 cm. Unlike the annual life-cycle and 1 - 2 year span of most shallow-water prawns, female royal red prawns may live 3 - 4 years. Males become sexually mature at CL around 2.6 cm and most breed only once; in contrast, females reach sexual maturity at a CL of around 3.1 cm and may breed several times throughout their life. Royal red prawn eggs are blue and mature females are characterized by the conspicuous blue ovary running through the body to the tail. Off NSW, there are two breeding seasons each year, one around March-April and the other in July-August. Royal red prawns are benthic feeders on micro-molluscs, crustaceans, and worms, and are an important food source for many benthic fish species.

Currently, the only significant commercial fishery for royal red prawns in Australia is off NSW and is shared between the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery (SESSF) and the NSW Ocean Trawl Fishery. The fishery began off Wollongong in the late 1970s, and trawlers from Wollongong, Sydney, Newcastle and Port Stephens have regularly targeted royal red prawns since. In past years, royal red prawns were occasionally fished by vessels from Coffs Harbour and the Clarence River in the north, and Ulladulla and Bermagui in the south. For a brief period in the 1980s, trawlers worked for royal red prawns off southern Queensland. The fishery is market-driven with frequent lack of demand and low wholesale prices resulting in a relatively lightly fished stock.
Endorsed trawlers from the central NSW ports normally use a single royal red prawn trawl net while northern trawlers retain their standard triple-rig gear used for eastern king prawns. Royal red prawns can be caught during both day and night although daytime catch rates are generally higher. There is an annual total allowable catch of 374 t for royal red prawns in the SESSF (2007) but catches since 2000 have been less than 250 t. Annual landings by NSW ocean prawn trawl vessels from waters north of Sydney were around 200 t between 1997 and 2003 but have since dropped to very low levels as demand has lessened. There have been no quantitative stock assessments of the royal red prawn stock in the SESSF or NSW Ocean Trawl Fishery but royal red prawns are believed to be lightly fished.

**Additional Notes**

- There has been a significant decline in targeting of royal red prawns since 2002/03 - recently only sporadic fishing has occurred.
- Catch rates were stable prior to 2007/08.
- The Commonwealth assessment considers royal red prawns to be ‘not overfished’.

**Catch**

*Recreational Catch of Royal Red Prawn*

There is no recreational harvest of royal red prawns in NSW.

**Historical Landings of Royal Red Prawn**

*Commercial landings (including available historical records) of royal red prawn for NSW from 1978/79 to 2008/09 for all fishing methods.*
Growth Curves of Royal Red Prawn

Growth curves of royal red prawn using parameters from Baelde (1994). Lengths are presented as carapace length (CL).

Further Reading


Please visit the CSIRO website, [http://www.marine.csiro.au/caab/](http://www.marine.csiro.au/caab/) and search for the species code (CAAB) 28 714005, common name or scientific name to find further information.