Frigate Mackerel
(*Auxis thazard*)

### Exploitation Status

**UNDEFINED**

A small pelagic species with low and fluctuating commercial landings. Recreational catch may be significant. Minimal information currently available.

### Scientific Name | Standard Name | Comment
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*Auxis thazard* | frigate mackerel | Also known as leadenall.

### Background

The frigate mackerel (*Auxis thazard*) is a small, pelagic, tuna-like member of the family Scombridae which includes tunas, mackerels, and bonitos. It is a highly migratory species with a worldwide distribution through all tropical and subtropical seas. In Australia, it is found around the whole of the mainland although it is more abundant in northern waters. The frigate mackerel is primarily an open water species preferring coastal seas, but it is known to enter sheltered bays and harbours e.g. it is occasionally caught in Sydney Harbour. It usually inhabits the top 50 m of the water column, but has been reported as deep as 200 m.

Frigate mackerel can be distinguished from other similar species of small, striped tunas such as the true bonitos (*Sarda* spp.), mackerel tuna (*Euthynnus affinis*) and skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*) by its very widely spaced dorsal fins - in these other species, the dorsal fins are very close together and often almost touching at their bases. Frigate mackerel grow to almost 60 cm fork length and a weight of nearly 4 kg but they are more commonly 25-40 cm and 0.3-1.3 kg. Because of their abundance, frigate mackerel are considered to be an important component of the food chain. Their primary food sources include small fish, squids, and planktonic larval crustaceans while in turn, frigate mackerel are preyed upon by larger fish such as tunas and billfish.

The NSW commercial fishery for frigate mackerel is very seasonal, with almost all the catch taken during summer. Most is taken by the Ocean Hauling Fishery but the reported landings are highly variable, ranging between about 2 and 20 t per annum since the year 2000. Because of their dark, oily flesh, frigate mackerel have low market acceptance and are commonly used for bait by both commercial and recreational fishers.
Additional Notes

- Small species (< 3 kg) which occurs in coastal waters around all Australian states.
- Minimal biological information is currently available.
- Frigate mackerel are a conditional target species in the Ocean Hauling Fishery and are caught sporadically.
- Mainly utilised for bait by the commercial fishery.
- Recreational catch may be greater than commercial landings.

Catch

Recreational Catch of Frigate Mackerel

The annual recreational harvest of frigate mackerel in NSW is likely to be less than 20 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.

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) 37 441009, common name or scientific name to find further information.

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