



NSW Research Angler Program

Issue 16 November 2017

Welcome to the “NSW Research Angler Program Newsletter” – providing you, the research anglers and spearfishers of NSW, feedback on the data you are collecting to help us learn more about NSW’s recreational fish species.

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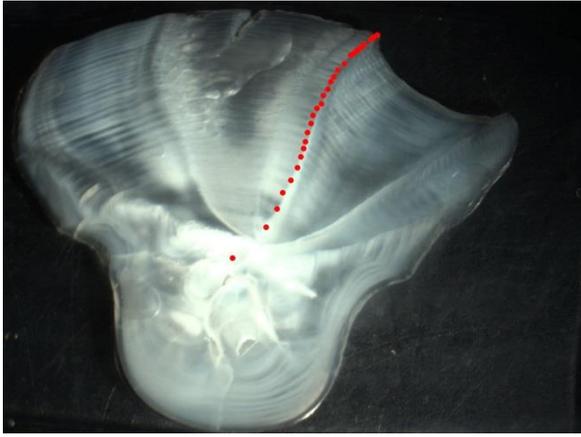
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Notable Donations from Winter 2017!

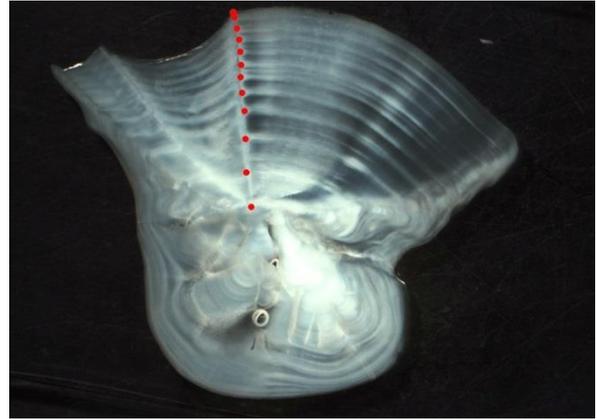
Even though winter sees some of the coldest temperatures of the year, often winter fishing can be some of the hottest! This was certainly the case this past winter for NSW Research Angler and serial frame donor Paul Lennon, whose impressive fishing exploits seem never to wane regardless of season. Paul’s truly impressive contribution to the NSW RAP this past winter involved the donation of a jewel from a mammoth 161 cm Port Stephens mulloway. A fish of this size is what mulloway fishers dream about and at an estimated 26 years of age is what researchers who study the species also dream about! At 161 cm, Paul’s donation not only represents the third largest mulloway so far recorded by DPI Fisheries researchers, but at 26 years old is also the (equal) third oldest! An epic fish on just about every level.



Paul Lennon with his record-breaking 161 cm 31 kg Port Stephens dinosaur of a mulloway estimated to be 26 years old. Photo courtesy Paul Lennon.



The otolith section from a 161 cm Port Stephens mulloway donated by Paul Lennon and estimated to be a remarkable 26 years old.



The otolith section from Paul Marsh's 116 cm fish below with growth rings clearly visible giving it an official estimated age of 10 years.

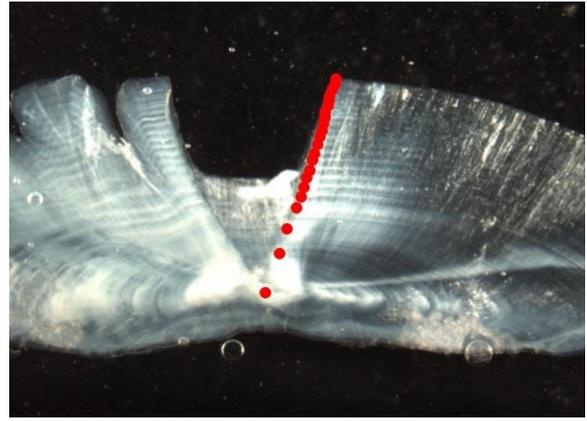


Despite its name, the NSW Research Angler Program is not just about anglers with some of our most impressive donations coming from the NSW spearfishing community, who are no less passionate about their sport and their favourite species than the anglers! Sans Souci Dolphins stalwart Paul Marsh is one such spearo who is not only very good at what he does in neoprene, but donates a lot of his catches to the NSW RAP. Paul's most recent donation came in the form of a cracking mulloway which tipped the scales at an impressive 20 kg and 116 cm. Even more impressive was that the fish was taken in the middle of winter on the NSW Central Coast – to bag a trophy mulloway on spear at such a time and place is no mean feat! The impressive capture also yielded an impressive estimated age of 10 years, at an average growth rate of almost 12 cm per year! Many thanks to Paul and all the spearfishers of NSW for their generous and enthusiastic involvement in the NSW RAP.

Paul Marsh's 116 cm 20 kg Central Coast mid-winter mulloway was in absolutely superb condition. Generously donated to the NSW RAP, the fish was estimated to be 10 years old. Photo courtesy Paul Marsh.



A beautifully-proportioned South Coast winter snapper of 69 cm donated to the NSW RAP by Stephen Thurstan. Photo courtesy Stephen Thurstan.

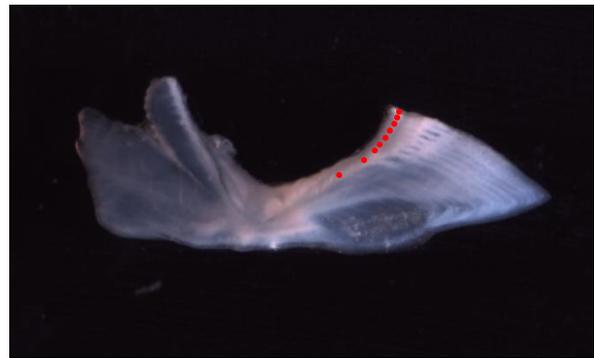


The otolith section from Stephen Thurstan's 69 cm fish at left showing the growth rings used to estimate its impressive 20 years of age.

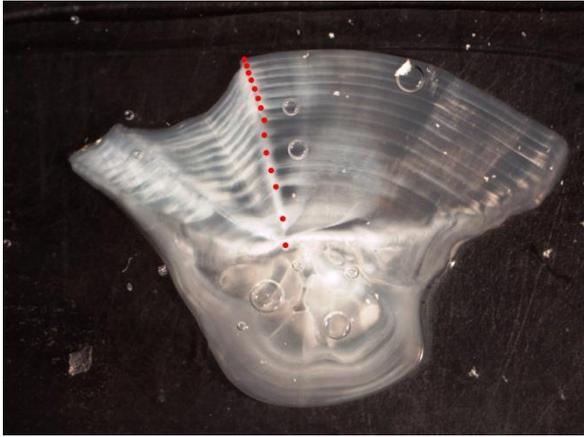
One of the great features of the NSW RAP is the wide range of important recreational species the program collects data on from the entire length of the NSW coast. Nowhere is this demonstrated better than with two notable donations to the program from winter 2017. Stephen Thurstan's 69 cm snapper came from the cool coastal waters off Kiama on the South Coast yielding a very impressive estimated age of 20 years (at an average growth rate of 3.5 cm per year). At the exact opposite end of the spectrum came a truly humungous Spanish mackerel from the comparatively warm waters off Coffs Harbour. At 175 cm and 38 kg Spaniards don't get much bigger than this, but surprisingly the fish was estimated to be a very youthful 8 years old giving it the staggering average growth rate of almost 22 cm per year! Despite the varied biology and behaviour of these two very different species and their disparate collection locations, thanks to the NSW RAP these two impressive fish now contribute to our knowledge of these key recreational fish species in NSW and the ongoing assessment of the health of their stocks.



Holy mackerel! 175 cm and 38 kg of mega North Coast Spanish mackerel donated to the NSW RAP over winter 2017. Photo courtesy Liam.



The otolith section from 'the mackerel-from-hell' at left showing that 8 years is plenty to grow to such freakish size if you are a Spanish mackerel!



The otolith section from Caleb Pritchard's thumper 138 cm winter Swansea mulloway revealed the fish to be 12 years old.

A first big mulloway off the beach is a significant occasion in any serious jewfish anglers fishing career and something that many anglers spend their entire lives trying to achieve. Not something Swansea angler Caleb Pritchard has to worry about any more after he managed to nail a huge 138 cm 25 kg mulloway off the beach on one unforgettable night in late May. Fortunately for DPI Fisheries researchers, Caleb chose to share his epic triumph by donating one of the jewels from his prize to the NSW RAP. Analysis of the otolith revealed Caleb's fish to be a ripe 12 years of age and it now makes a small, but important contribution to our knowledge of mulloway growth and longevity in NSW waters.



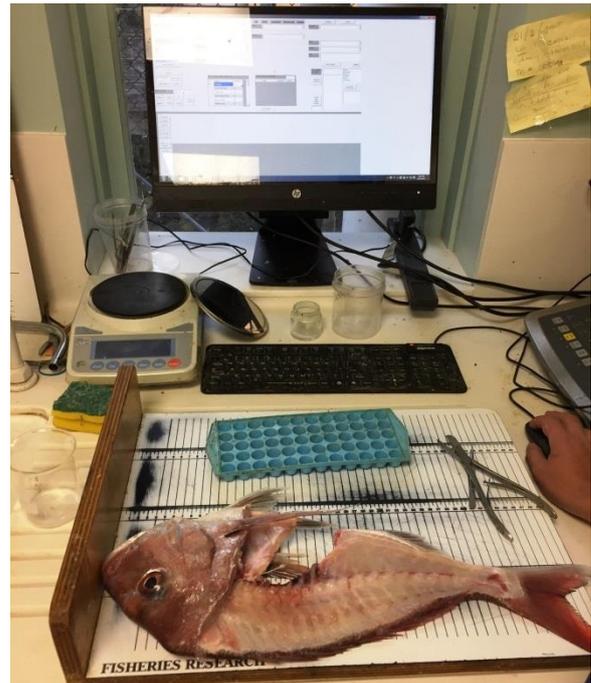
Now that's going to be hard to beat! 138 cm of fat silver mulloway caught off the beach by young NSW Research Angler Caleb Pritchard. Photo courtesy Caleb Pritchard.

Project Progress – Winter 2017

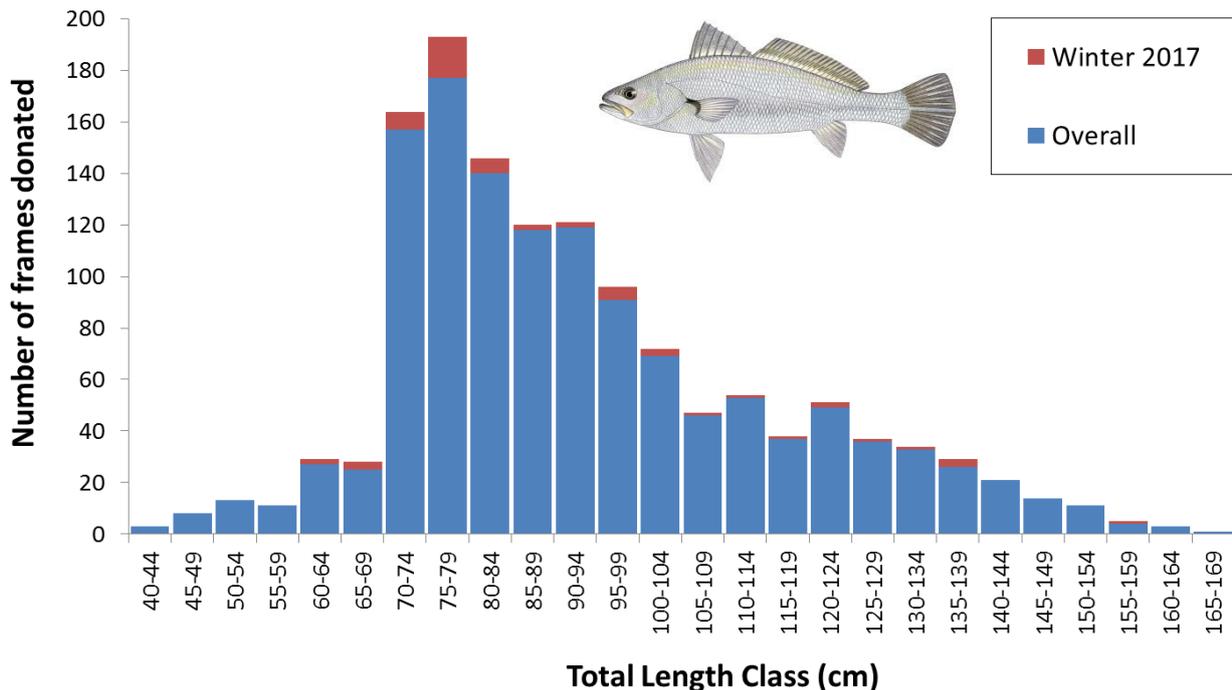
Another 63 generously-donated mulloway frames made their way through the Fisheries Ageing Lab at the Sydney Institute of Marine Science over winter 2017. More than 1300 mulloway frames have now been donated to the NSW RAP since its inception in spring 2013, including more than 400 metre-plus fish, 198 over 120 cm and 54 over 140 cm!

To add to these winter mulloway were 50 snapper including a pair of 80 cm fish from winter's regular snapper wonderland, Coffs Harbour. Our first dozen pearl perch also came as bycatch from winter snappering including a whopping 53 cm fish from Urunga estimated to be just 4 years old!

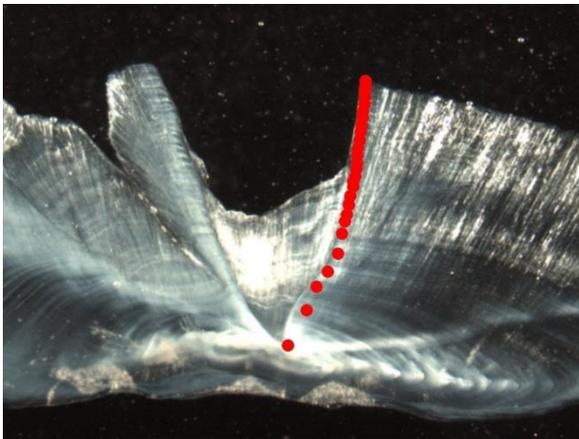
Right: Winter means snapper! One of the 71 snapper frames donated over winter gets the 'once over' in the Fisheries Ageing Lab at the Sydney Institute of Marine Science.



Lengths of mulloway (*Argyrosomus japonicus*) donated to the NSW Research Angler Program from winter 2017 and overall (since spring 2013).



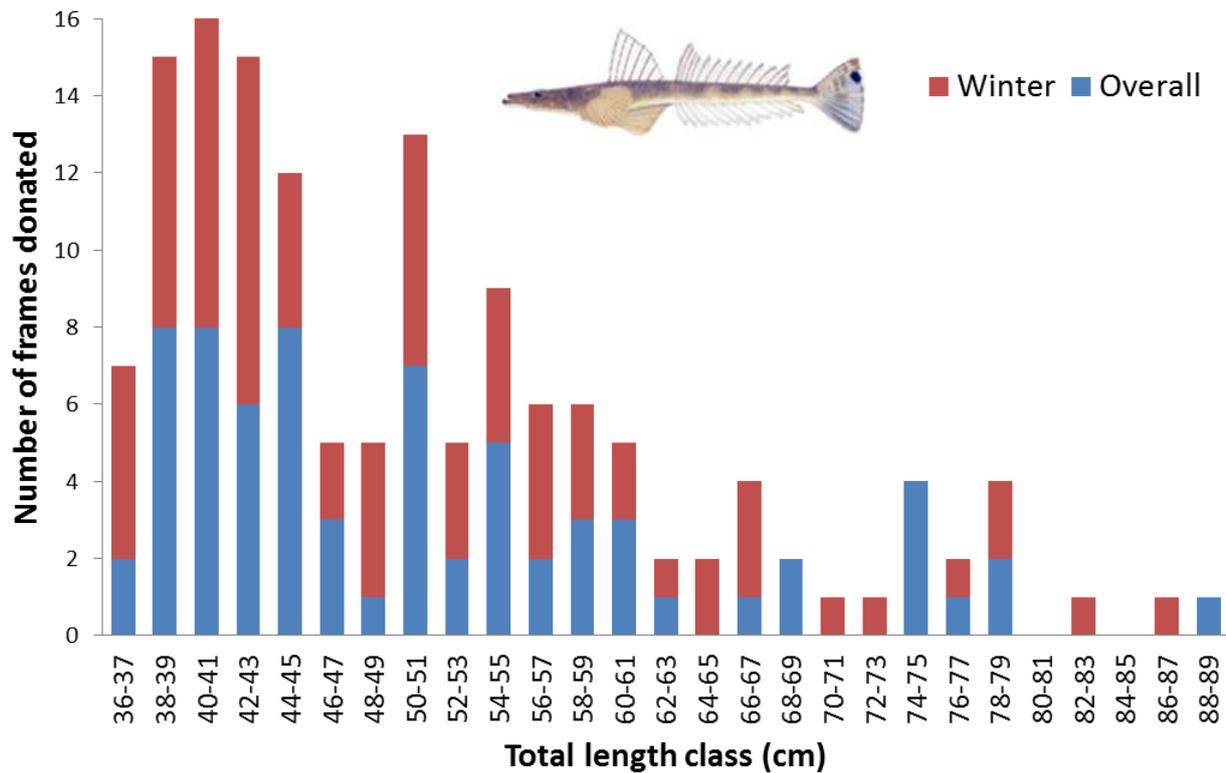
And don't forget that you can now post the otoliths from your mullet catches (or otoliths from any of our species – if you can find them!) to us making donating to the program even easier. All you need to do is contact us at the NSW RAP (T: 9435 4671, E: research.angler@dpi.nsw.gov.au) and we will send 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 otolith 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!



The otolith section from an 90.0 cm snapper donated to the program over autumn resulted in the Evans Head fish being estimated to be a grand 25 years old!

One of NSW's great all-rounders is the humble dusky flathead (*Platycephalus fuscus*). Accessible and catchable in wide variety of habitats with everything from carefully-crafted flies to frozen prawns, this winter's dusky donations almost doubled the number of frames donated to the program so far! An amazing 74 dusky flathead were donated over winter 2017 with most fish coming from some classic flathead haunts of the Hawkesbury River, Brisbane Water and Lake Macquarie. Not unexpectedly, around half of the donated frames were from fish between the minimum legal length of 36 cm and ~50 cm, but there were almost 30 frames donated from fish of >50 cm all the way up to an 83.5 cm fish from Port Stephens and an 87 cm Hawkesbury fish!

Lengths of dusky flathead (*Platycephalus fuscus*) donated to the NSW Research Angler Program in winter 2017 and overall.



“Top Five” dusky flathead donors overall (as of 31 August 2017):

Donor	No. frames donated	Region
Mike Hollis	38	Sydney
Greg Gowland	18	Central Coast
Jason Szabo	18	Central Coast
Tom Perry	17	Central Coast
Peter Higgs	7	Narooma

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

Techo Time!

Welcome to the third instalment of “Techo Time” where our resident NSW Research Angler Program technician, Antony Gould, takes you through processing a 347 kg broadbill swordfish and analysing its otoliths.

In this article, I thought I’d invite you along the journey I had with a couple of opportunistically-donated monster broadbill swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*)! Now we don’t normally take donations outside of nominated RAP species, but occasionally someone catches something fairly unique and curiosity gets the better of us. The maximum age a species can live for is an important nugget of information in a lot of stock assessment models, so getting our hands on big specimens is always worthwhile. If you catch and keep something that isn’t a mulloway, kingy, snapper, dusky, tailor or mackerel but it’s BIG, then drop us a line via email – it could tell us something new about a species.

I was cutting some mulloway otoliths one morning in June, when Julian came into the lab and told me that he had something fairly unique coming in, two huge broadbill heads, one from a fish which tipped the scales at 347 kg! “Sure, I’ll give it a go” I said, a little unconfidently. Nobody in the lab had pulled out broadbill otoliths before so we turned to the internet and googled “swordfish otolith extraction”. Sure enough, somebody had made a video (<http://www.seanoe.org/data/00317/42794/data/42178.mp4>). The video was of the extraction of otoliths from a juvenile broadbill, and even this looked enormously challenging. We knew the behemoths we had to deal with would be even more difficult! As pelagic fish grow; their brain cavity increases in size but their otoliths do not - the haystack gets bigger but the needle doesn’t!

A real seamonster! 347 kg of deep-dwelling Mallacoota broadbill swordfish donated to the NSW RAP – we were looking for something 3 mm long inside that enormous head!



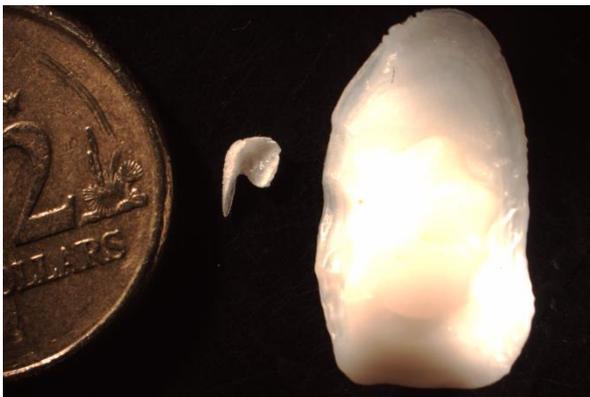


I made a make-shift work bench out of a couple plastic fish bins, covered myself in gloves and an apron and begun cutting into one of the heads with a hacksaw. It took forever but eventually I made enough cuts to expose the brain. The brain was the size of a schooner glass, and the consistency of yoghurt. I knew the normal dissection equipment would not work so we used a dessert spoon to start digging out all that brain!

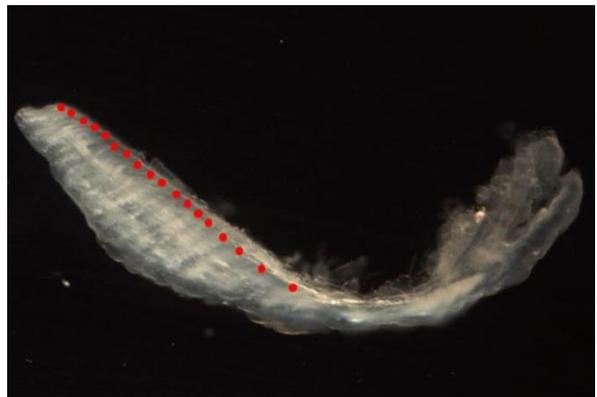
Faced with an empty cavity, I started poking around with a pair of forceps. Pelagic species otoliths are normally rather tiny, and swordfish are no exception. Thankfully otoliths from pelagic species are usually contained inside the saccule and utricle of the fish's inner ear – a long translucent tube – and from the video I knew that if I found this, I would find the otoliths.

Left: NSW Research Angler Program technician Anton Gould gets to work with a hacksaw to access the otoliths from the head of a 347 kg broadbill swordfish.

Extensive probing and eventually I had a tube. Dissection under a microscope revealed a tiny barely-visible sliver of calcium carbonate inside – a broadbill swordfish otolith! You beauty. Now that I was in the zone I quickly found the other one, carefully removed each the from their inner ear tubes. The next day, I embedded the otoliths in clear fibreglass resin blocks. This helps us to cut them by creating a matrix around the otolith. The block was clamped onto an otolith cutting saw, and two spaced diamond blades cut a thin (about 0.3 mm) cross-section through the mid-point of the otolith. After polishing, mounting to glass slide and examination under a microscope, the 347 kg swordfish showed really nice rings and we estimated it to have been 18 years old, while the smaller fish (210 kg) was only 8 years old. A few hours work for a few data points. This information is slow to collect and I come home reeking like rotten fish, but it's satisfying to know what I'm doing will help conserve these magnificent beasts into the future and I love how much everyone who volunteers their frames to the Research Angler Program feels the same way. Please keep sending your frames, it's a pleasure working with all of you.



The otolith from a 347 kg broadbill swordfish (centre) with a \$2 coin and otolith from a 70 cm mulloway for scale.



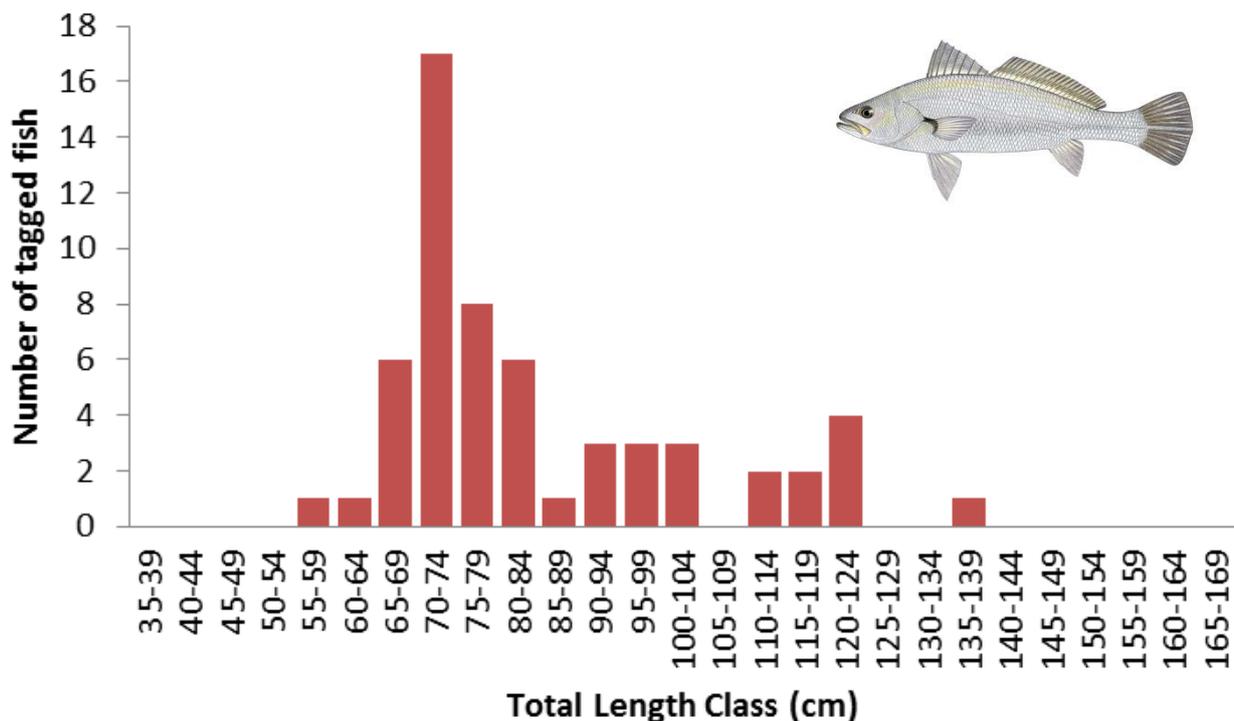
The sectioned otolith from the 347 kg swordfish showing the growth rings we used to estimate its 18 years of age.

NSW RAP – ANSA Tagging Project Update

Winter 2017 was another pearler for the NSW RAP-ANSA mulloway tagging project with another 59 mulloway tagged ranging in size from 55 cm up to a whopping 136 cm and 21 kg! This brings the overall number of tagged jewies to more than 2,000 since March 2014! The graph below shows the sizes of winters tagged mulloway and the key feature to note here is the numbers of big mulloway tagged. Winter mulloway hunting is often known to be more a matter of quality over quantity and this certainly rang true in 2017 with 18 fish larger than 90 cm in length tagged – that’s a third of all the fish tagged for the season!

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 from winter 2017.



One of winter’s standout tagging performances came from Lachlan Monro fishing some of his favourite jewy haunts around Coffs Harbour. Lachlan not only managed to tag six winter mulloway, but what mulloway they were with his largest 4 fish going 136, 123, 122 and 115 cm! It is challenging enough to catch mulloway of this size, but to tag and successfully release them is a mighty achievement and thanks to Lachlan’s winter exploits, there are now a bunch more big fellas buzzing around the beaches, headlands and rivers of the Mid-North Coast with tags in them! Serial offender “Tagger 86” also managed to again tag some big fish – his specialty – with a pair of 120 cm fish and a 116 from the Hawkesbury River part of his winter haul. Mark Williams tagged his first six fish out of Lake Macquarie ranging in size from 67 to 82 cm. In Port Macquarie, it was a case of team efforts bringing home the goods with the Saxon’s and Danby’s tagging 5 fish each from the Hastings and Maria Rivers.

Top Five taggers for winter 2017 (as of 31 August 2017):

Tagger	No. fish tagged	Region
Lachlan Monro	6	Coffs Harbour
Peter Rothwell	6	Sydney
Mark Williams	6	Lake Macquarie
Mark & Mandy Saxon	5	Port Macquarie
Zachary & Shannon Danby	5	Port Macquarie



Another astonishing effort from a mulloway recaptured over winter 2017 came from fish with tag number A607416. Tagged at Coffs Harbour by Paul Blade way back in May 2016 when just 57 cm in length, this fish was recaptured some 411 days later on 14 July 2017 in the Gold Coast Seaway by Cameron Harrison at 78 cm. But that's not all – Cameron released the fish only to have it recaptured 9 days later again in the Sseaway by Shane Dickson! This time however, the fish wasn't so lucky going straight to the family table! 265 km is quite the swim for a mulloway of this size, but again shows what these fish are capable of and when they feel the urge to "up and move", they really do it!

Left: Lachlan Monro with 115 cm and 14.5 kg of cracking Mid-North Coast mulloway tagged and ready for release in July. Photo courtesy Lachlan Monro.

Top Five largest fish tagged for winter 2017 (as of 31 August 2017):

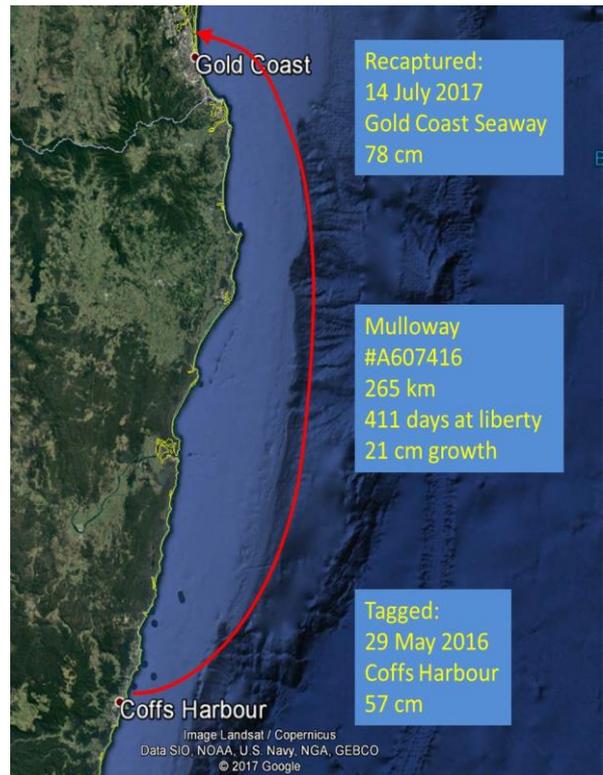
Tagger	Total length (cm)	System
Lachlan Monro	136	Coffs Harbour
Lachlan Monro	123	Coffs Harbour
Lachlan Monro	122	Coffs Harbour
"Tagger 86"	120	Hawkesbury River
"Tagger 86"	120	Hawkesbury River

Top Five largest fish tagged overall (as of 31 August 2017):

Tagger	Total length (cm)	System	Season
"Tagger 86"	155.5	Hawkesbury River	Autumn 2016
Josh Anderson	152.5	Yamba	Spring 2016
"Tagger 86"	152	Hawkesbury River	Spring 2015
"Tagger 86"	148	Hawkesbury River	Summer 2016-17
"Tagger 86"	146	Hawkesbury River	Summer 2016-17



A 57 cm Coffs Harbour mulloway caught by Paul Blade just prior to tagging with tag #A607416. Photo courtesy Paul Blade.



The epic 265 km journey of tagged mulloway #A607416 from Coffs Harbour to the Gold Coast in 411 days growing 21 cm in the process!

Swimming 265 km in 411 days is no doubt impressive, but no less impressive was a 121 cm fish caught by Mick Didio at South West Rocks which was at liberty for a massive 838 days after being tagged at Port Macquarie. A pair of ~80 cm mulloway from a single commercial haul shot at Seven Mile Beach had two very different tagging origins. The first fish tagged at 60 cm 100 km to the north in Port Hacking by Andrew Talbot a gigantic 797 days earlier. The second tagged by Brenton Spinks when 65 cm in the nearby Shoalhaven River only 281 days earlier.



Most of our other winter 2017 recaptures however displayed that classic mulloway trait of remaining resident in their home patch with fish recaptured in very close proximity to where they were tagged. Three of Tom Crittenden's 60 tagged mulloway to date were recaptured over winter, two tagged in the Myall River recaptured in Port Stephens and one tagged and recaptured in the Georges River. South of Sydney, a 62 cm fish tagged by Brad Gibson at Thirroul was recaptured by Paul Busche just down the road at Austimer growing to 77 cm in its 396 days at liberty. Also at liberty for roughly 400 days was a Peter Rothwell-tagged fish of 85 cm recaptured by Joe Grima growing to 94 cm in the Hawkesbury River.

Not so lucky this time! Mulloway with tag #A607416 after being recaptured for the second time in 9 days in the Gold Coast Seaway, this time by Shane Dickson. Photo courtesy Shane Dickson.

Tagged mulloway recaptures for winter 2017 (as of 31 August):

Tagging angler	Total length (cm)	Tagging location	Recapture angler	Total length (cm)	Recapture location	Days at liberty
Brad Gibson	62	Thirroul	Paul Busche	77	Austimer	396
Tom Crittenden	64	Georges River	Suhail Mohammed	75	Georges River	352
Tom Crittenden	76	Myall River	Steve Webb	80	Port Stephens	167
Tom Crittenden	80	Myall River	Mitchell Kelly	87.5	Port Stephens	172
<i>Unknown</i>	102	Port Macquarie	Mick Didio	121	South West Rocks	838
Peter Rothwell	85	Hawkesbury River	Joe Grima	94	Hawkesbury River	406
Paul Blade	57	Coffs Harbour	Cameron Harrison	78	Gold Coast Seaway	411
Cameron Harrison	78	Gold Coast Seaway	Shane Dickson	78	Gold Coast Seaway	9
Ben Harris	67	Georges River	Chris Andrade	70	Georges River	4
Andrew Talbot	60	Port Hacking	Commercial catch	83	Seven Mile Beach	797
Brenton Spinks	65	Shoalhaven River	Commercial catch	82	Seven Mile Beach	281



Slow learner! Georges River mulloway with tag #A595541 (pictured at right) recaptured by Chris Andrade (left) just 4 days after being caught and tagged by Ben Harris in July 2017. Photos courtesy Chris Andrade.

Next time you're out chasing mulloway, keep an eye out for one of our yellow NSW DPI tags like this one found in a fish caught twice in nine days after swimming 265 km from Coffs Harbour to the Gold Coast. Remember that the tag may be fouled with algae.



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 2017 NSW RAP Newsletter!

Also 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](#)).

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.



Lachlan Monro in the process of reviving a freshly-tagged 115 cm 14.5 kg mulloway prior to release. Photo courtesy Lachlan Monro.



Clay Hilbert with a lovely 125 cm Coffs Harbour mulloway tagged and ready for release from winter 2017. Photo courtesy NEWTAG.

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.



Lake Macquarie newest “Trophy Dusky Flathead Fishery” estuary!

Lake Macquarie on the NSW Central Coast has recently been announced as the latest estuary system to be added to NSW DPI’s “Trophy Dusky Flathead Fishery” Concept. With a well-known reputation for producing genuine “trophy” duskies, Lake Macquarie joins St Georges Basin and Tuross Lake in the trial program. Almost 100 “trophy” duskies have already been tagged in St Georges Basin and Tuross Lake and Lake Macquarie promises to provide more critical information on dusky flathead fisheries in these iconic estuaries.



Above: A trophy Lake Macquarie dusky flathead is released kayak-side by Mark Williams. Photo courtesy Mark Williams.

Left: Chris Feijzes with a 90 cm trophy dusky from St Georges Basin. Photo courtesy JBFF.

The “Trophy Dusky Flathead Fishery” concept has been set up by NSW DPI in collaboration with the local community to promote the importance of these systems as places where anglers can chase big flathead. Key to the concept is promoting successful catch and release of these ‘trophy’ fish of greater than 70 cm in length. Dusky flathead have been shown to have very low mortality rates following catch and release angling and a “Code of Practice” has been developed detailing best practice catch and release techniques which can be found in a helpful video [here](#).

The “Trophy Dusky Flathead Fishery” concept not only helps ensure the sustainability of recreational fisheries by protecting large female fish, but also provides anglers with the real possibility of catching a monster ‘lizard’! As part of the trial, the NSW Research Angler Program is involved in a small tagging program, the keeping of Research Angler Diaries and of course any retained dusky flathead frames can be donated to research! The two drop-off points closest to the action are [Fishermans Warehouse Tackle World Marks Point](#) (804 Pacific Hwy, Marks Point, T: 4945 2152) and [Tackle Power Sandgate](#) (2/1 Mangrove Rd, Sandgate, T: 4960 1294) and Charlestown (87 Pacific Hwy, Charlestown, T: 4943 8780). If you would like to participate in the Research Angler Diary component of the “Trophy Dusky Flathead Fishery Concept” for any of the participating estuaries, please contact the NSW RAP (research.angler@dpi.nsw.gov.au, 9435 4671) and we will send you out a Research Angler Diary pack.

More information on the “Trophy Dusky Flathead Fishery” program, including the code of practice, can be found on the [NSW DPI website](#).

2017 Dave Irvine Memorial Snapper Classic

Well the 2017 Dave Irvine Memorial Snapper Classic has been “run and won” for another year and once again the NSW RAP in collaboration with ANSA NSW were again there to encourage competitors to tag their reddie prior to release.



Steve McCarthy with a humungous 95.3 cm Coffs Harbour snapper tagged and ready for release – the largest snapper caught at the DIMSC for 2017. Photo courtesy Steve McCarthy.



Team ‘NEWTAG’s Stan Konstantaras with 87.5 cm of tagged knobby snapper caught at the 2017 DIMSC. Photo courtesy ANSA-NEWTAG.

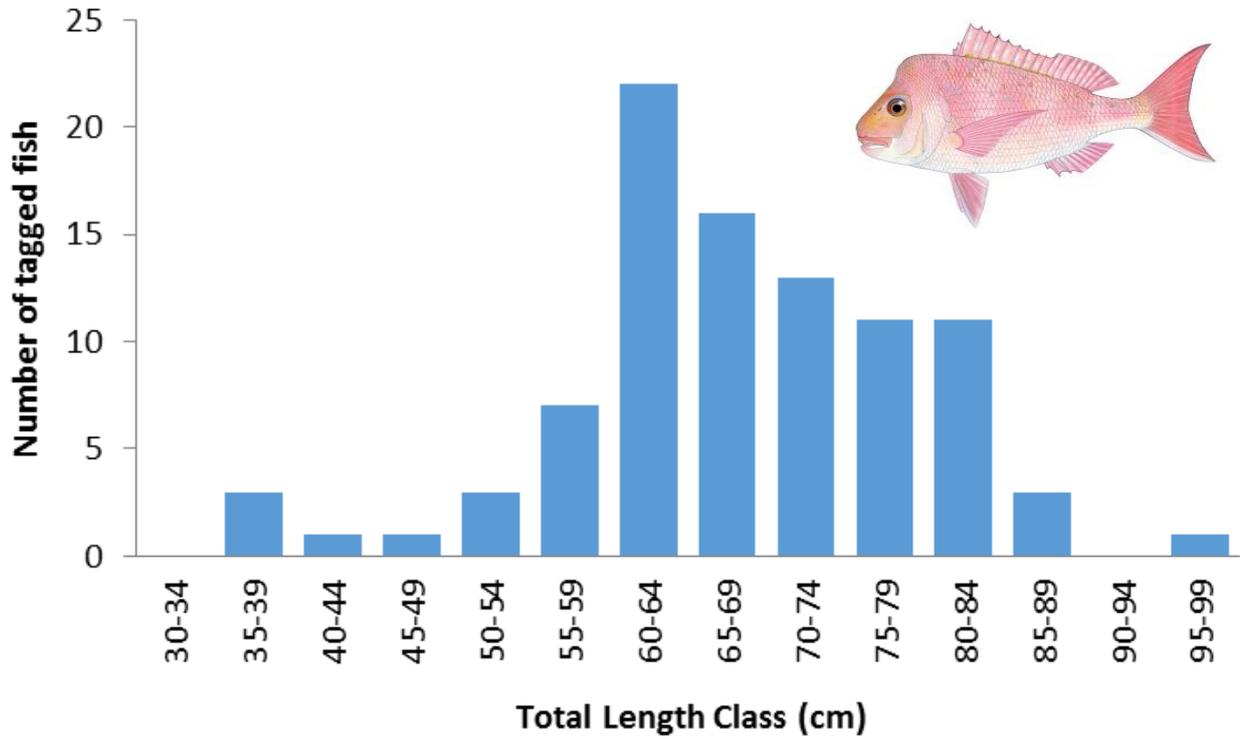
Aided by some incredible winter weather and 35 of the East Coast’s best snapper anglers, a total of 92 snapper were tagged over the 2 day comp. The fish ranged in size from 35 cm up to a whopping 95.3 cm with an impressive average size of 68 cm! As can be seen from the below graph, this average was driven to such an impressive size by the fact that 84% of the tagged fish were larger than 60 cm. Artificially again accounted for most of the fish caught resulting in tagged fish being released in excellent condition. Shaun Cameron and Janelle Rose were the number one taggers for the comp both putting tags in some 7 fish each and the largest fish caught for the comp, at 95.3 cm, was tagged by Steve McCarthy. Where all these fish end up will provide researchers with excellent movement and growth data for one of eastern Australia’s favourite recreational fish species.

An awesome effort from all the taggers involved for producing such a great result and huge congratulations to the guys from ANSA NEWTAG for keeping tagging involved in such a fantastic comp!



Winners are grinners! DIMSC 2017 champion team ‘Squidgy’ consisting of Chris Cleaver (left) and Ben Coombes (right) with a fine pair of Coffs Harbour snapper tagged during the 2017 DIMSC. Photos courtesy Chris Cleaver, Ben Coombes.

Length frequency of snapper tagged by competitors in the 2017 Dave Irvine Memorial Snapper Classic.



Team 'Tor's Dom Cassarotto with an 80 cm snapper tagged and released in near-perfect conditions off Sawtell. Photo courtesy Dom Cassarotto.



Peter Stamopoulos from Team 'NEWTAG' with one of his three successfully tagged snapper from an early morning drift at the 2017 DIMSC. Photo courtesy Peter Stamopoulos.

The “Top Fives”!

Our sincerest thanks to the following dedicated Research Anglers and spearfishers who have made it into our “Top Five” lists of frame donors overall and those for winter 2017.

This season’s “Top Five” donors contributed frames from a real mix of all the nominated RAP species, but most were in the form of snapper and mulloway. Dave Rae took advantage of a great winter of snapper fishing at Coffs Harbour donating frames from 19 snapper to 58 cm and four fine pearlies to 53 cm! Cameron Doak found the waters around Port Macquarie similarly fertile donating frames from 13 snapper and two mulloway. Jamie Culver’s first frame donations from Port Stephens consisted of six frames from some extremely impressive snapper of 50-60 cm along with two mulloway to boot. Neil White’s eight frames included no fewer than seven pearl perch to 40 cm and Ben Henshaw enjoyed some cracking winter mulloway-chasing donating frames from seven fish up to 101 cm from Lake Macquarie.

“Top Five” frame donors winter 2017 (as of 31 August):

Donor	No. frames donated	Region	Species
Dave Rae	23	Coffs Harbour	Snapper, Pearl Perch
Cameron Doak	16	Port Macquarie	Mulloway, Snapper
Jamie Culver	8	Port Stephens	Mulloway, Snapper
Neil White	8	Crowdy Head	Snapper, Pearl Perch
Ben Henshaw	7	Lake Macquarie	Mulloway

“Top Five” largest mulloway donated winter 2017 (as of 31 August):

Donor	Total length (cm)	Estimated age (years)	Region
Paul Lennon	161	26	Port Stephens
Caleb Pritchard	138	12	Lake Macquarie
Chris Webb	135	10	Coffs Harbour
Derrick Cruz	125	8	Coffs Harbour
Dean Overhall	123	10	Sydney

“Top Five” largest snapper donated winter 2017 (as of 31 August):

Donor	Total length (cm)	Estimated age (years)	Region
Anon	90	25	Evans Head
Keith Kneebone	80	19	Coffs Harbour
Keith Kneebone	80	16	Coffs Harbour
Cameron Doak	75	10	Port Macquarie
Todd & Bob King	72	20	Kiama



Young NSW Research Angler Caleb Pritchard with his 138 cm 12 year old fish from the beach near Swansea. Photo courtesy Caleb Pritchard.



Drew Egan with 105 cm of microjig-eating mulloway from Evans Head estimated to be 5 years old. Photo courtesy Drew Egan.

Paul Lennon's 161 cm Port Stephens leviathan from earlier in the newsletter was not only the largest mulloway we had donated to the NSW RAP over winter 2017 at 161 cm, but it was also the third largest donated to the NSW RAP to date. It was also the oldest winter mulloway at an estimated 26 years, making this fish the (equal) third oldest mulloway so far recorded from NSW! Far from being the only impressive mulloway donated to the program, we also had Caleb Pritchard's 138 cm 12 year old from earlier in the newsletter along with a 135 cm 10 year old Coffs Harbour fish from Chris Webb, another Coffs fish – a 125 cm 8 year old – and 123 cm Sydney fish donated by Dean Overhall estimated to be 10 years old.

“Top Five” largest mulloway donated overall (as of 31 August 2017):

Donor	Total length (cm)	Estimated age (years)	Region	Season
Nathan Debono	168	26	Newcastle	Winter 2015
Adam Price	164	24	Sydney	Spring 2013
Paul Lennon	161	26	Port Stephens	Winter 2017
Keith Kneebone	160	20	Sydney	Autumn 2014
Mark McCabe	159	21	Sydney	Spring 2013

Winter-donated snapper also contained some seriously impressive sizes and ages with a 90 cm Evans Head fish the largest and oldest at an estimated 25 years! A fine pair of 80 cm Coffs Harbour fish donated by Keith Kneebone were estimated to be 19 and 16 years old. Two Kiama fish, one donated by Steve Thurstan at 69 cm and one donated by Todd and Bob King at 72 cm were both estimated to be an impressive 20 years old. In contrast was Cameron Doak's chunky 75 cm Port Macquarie reddie which was estimated to be just 10 years old.

“Top Five” oldest mulloway donated winter 2017 (as of 31 August):

Donor	Estimated age (years)	Total length (cm)	Region
Paul Lennon	26	161	Port Stephens
Caleb Pritchard	12	138	Lake Macquarie
Chris Webb	10	135	Coffs Harbour
Dean Overhall	10	123	Sydney
Derrick Cruz	8	125	Coffs Harbour

“Top Five” oldest snapper donated winter 2017 (as of 31 August):

Donor	Estimated age (years)	Total length (cm)	Region
Anon	25	90	Evans Head
Stephen Thurstan	20	69	Kiama
Todd & Bob King	20	72	Kiama
Keith Kneebone	19	80	Coffs Harbour
Keith Kneebone	16	80	Coffs Harbour

“Top Five” oldest mulloway donated overall (as of 31 August 2017):

Donor	Estimated age (years)	Total length (cm)	Region	Season
Vaughan Little	34	156	Nowra	Spring 2013
Paul Lennon	33	149	Port Stephens	Summer 2016-17
Nathan Debono	26	168	Newcastle	Winter 2015
Paul Lennon	26	161	Port Stephens	Winter 2017
Scott Robson	26	154	Newcastle	Summer 2013-14
Evan Leeson	26	144	Port Macquarie	Autumn 2014
Paul Martin	26	148	Batemans Bay	Autumn 2017
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

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

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. The list of drop-off locations for donated frames is changing regularly as more tackle retailers become involved in the program.

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

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/recreational/resources/fish-tagging/researchangler/drop-off-locations>



Paul Marsh donated the frame from this cracking 116 cm Central Coast mulloway over winter 2017 – it was estimated to be 10 years old. Photo courtesy Paul Marsh.



This lovely 69 cm South Coast snapper donated by Stephen Thurstan was estimated to be a grand 20 years of age! Photo courtesy Stephen Thurstan.

Monthly Prize Draw Winners!

The lucky monthly NSW Research Angler Program prize winners for winter 2017 were decided by randomly drawing one frame donor from each month.

Congratulations to the following Research Anglers:

June	Chris Webb	(Coffs Harbour)
July	Jamie Culver	(Port Stephens)
August	Dave Rae	(Urunga)



Each winner will receive a \$50 gift voucher generously donated by [MO Tackle Coffs Harbour](#) (for use in-store or online)

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 (**Mulloway, Snapper, Dusky Flathead, Yellowtail Kingfish, Tailor, Pearl Perch, 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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