

# Ballina angelfish

*Chaetodontoplus ballinae*



Illustration by Pat Tully

## Threatened Species Unit

Fisheries Conservation and Aquaculture,  
Port Stephens

## Introduction

Ballina angelfish occur in northern NSW around Coffs Harbour, Ballina and North Solitary Islands, and around the Balls Pyramid area of Lord Howe Island. The species is found in deep water (at and often below the limits of scuba diving) in rocky regions such as seamounts.

Ballina angelfish are listed as a protected fish in NSW under the *Fisheries Management Act 1994*. Heavy penalties apply for taking or possessing them.

## Description

Ballina angelfish are distinctly coloured with a base of white overlaid by a black band running along the back. The tail and pectoral fins are bright yellow in colour. Scales are very small

with rough edges. The species is known to grow to at least 20 cm long.

## Habitat and ecology

- Ballina angelfish generally inhabit coral and rocky reefs at depths of 25–125 m. However, the species has also been found at depths as shallow as 12 m.
- They are regularly found in pairs and occupy home territories of approximately 2500 m<sup>2</sup>.
- The diet of Ballina angelfish is not fully known; however, other species within the genus feed on sponges, tunicates and algae.

## Why are Ballina angelfish protected?

- Ballina angelfish are protected due to their natural rarity and low abundance.
- The predominant threat to Ballina angelfish is illegal collection for the marine aquarium fish trade, where the species would attract high prices due to its rarity.



## What conservation actions are underway?

- Maintaining bans on taking Ballina angelfish in NSW and Commonwealth waters, and protecting them from illegal removal.
- Educating fishers on how to identify Ballina angelfish and the best ways to return any incidentally caught Ballina angelfish to the water.
- Protecting deep coral and rocky reef habitats (greater than 20 m deep) important to the survival of the Ballina angelfish.
- Ballina angelfish habitats, such as seamounts, are located in a number of protected areas in NSW including the Lord Howe Island Marine Park and at Balls Pyramid in Commonwealth waters.
- Implementing the Protected, Threatened and Pest Species Sighting Program. Report any sightings of the species on the NSW Department of Primary Industries 24 hour automated message-taking service by calling (02) 4916 3877.
- Implementing the Commercial Fisheries Threatened and Protected Species Interaction Reporting arrangements.

## Legal implications

Taking or possessing Ballina angelfish (or any other species of protected fish) is an offence and heavy penalties apply. For corporations these penalties can include fines of up to \$55 000 while individuals can face fines of up to \$11 000 and up to 3 months in prison.

## Bibliography and further reading

Allen GR, Steene R & Allen M 1998, *A guide to angelfishes and butterflyfishes*, Odyssey Publishing / Tropical Reef Research, Perth, 250 pp.

Parker PG 1994, 'Re-discovering the Ballina angelfish *Chaetodontoplus ballinae* (*Pomacanthidae*) Whitley, 1959: two new fish records for Lord Howe Island, Australia', *Freshwater and Marine Aquarium* (US), August 1994: 112–15.

## For further information

Phone 1300 550 474.

For more information on general fishing regulations check with your local fisheries office or on the NSW DPI website at [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries)

## Contact NSW DPI Threatened Species Unit

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