Eastern Red Scorpionfish
(*Scorpaena cardinalis*)

**EXPLOITATION STATUS**

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<th>Fully Fished</th>
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Fishing mortality appears to be similar to natural mortality. The species has a slow growth rate and considerable longevity.

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Scorpaena cardinalis*

**STANDARD NAME**

eastern red scorpionfish

**COMMENT**

Also known as red rockcod.

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**Background**

The eastern red scorpionfish (*Scorpaena cardinalis*), also known as the red rockcod, is a member of the scorpionfish family Scorpaenidae, a large family containing about 350 species worldwide and occurring in all temperate and tropical seas. The eastern red scorpionfish is distributed along the east coast of Australia from southern Queensland (Noosa Heads) to eastern Victoria and is also recorded from New Zealand. The species inhabits estuarine and inshore ocean waters and is common on coastal reefs of NSW.

Eastern red scorpionfish grow slowly, reaching approximately 22cm in length after 5 years. They have a maximum reported age of 33 years. Males grow faster and attain greater lengths than females.

Eastern red scorpionfish mature between 17 and 26 cm, probably between 3 and 6 years of age. They spawn between December and April, with peak gonad development in February/March. However, the mode of spawning is unknown.

Eastern red scorpionfish are taken in small numbers in the NSW ocean trap and line fishery where they are listed as a secondary species. The catch of eastern red scorpionfish by recreational fishers is thought to be at least three times bigger than the commercial catch. They are well represented in catches from offshore recreational fishing and ranked 22nd and 21st in abundance during surveys of offshore trailerboat fishers during 1993/94 and 1994/95 respectively. In NSW, there is no minimum legal length for eastern red scorpionfish and a recreational bag limit of 5.
**Additional Notes**

- A relatively long-lived inshore species (maximum reported age 33 years), targeted by both recreational and commercial fishers.
- Relatively high price received through Sydney Market but commercial landings remain low (5 to 10 t per annum).
- Bag limit since 2007 for recreational fishers of 5 fish.

**Catch**

*Recreational Catch of Eastern Red Scorpionfish*

The annual recreational harvest of eastern red scorpionfish in NSW is likely to be between 20 t and 50 t. This estimate is based upon the results of the offshore recreational trailer boat survey (Steffe *et al.* 1996) and onsite surveys undertaken by I & I NSW.

**Landings by Commercial Fishery of Eastern Red Scorpionfish**

Reported landings of eastern red scorpionfish 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 Eastern Red Scorpionfish**

Growth curve of eastern red scorpionfish using parameters from Stewart and Hughes (2008). Lengths are presented as total length (TL).

Commercial landings (including available historical records) of eastern red scorpionfish for NSW from 1990/91 to 2008/09 for all fishing methods.
Length Frequency of Eastern Red Scorpionfish - Recreational Fishery

The length distribution of eastern red scorpionfish landed by recreational trailer-boat fishers between 1993 and 1996 was comprised mainly of fish between 20 and 40 cm total length (TL). There is no minimum legal length for eastern red scorpionfish in NSW.

Length Frequency of Eastern Red Scorpionfish - Commercial Fishery

The length distribution of eastern red scorpionfish landed by NSW commercial fishers during 2004/05 to 2005/06 comprised mainly fish between 20 and 40 cm total length (TL). There is no minimum legal length for eastern red scorpionfish in NSW.

Further Reading


Please visit the CSIRO website, http://www.marine.csiro.au/caab/ and search for the species code (CAAB) 37 287066 , common name or scientific name to find further information.