Southern Maori Wrasse

*(Ophthalmolepis lineolatus)*

**Exploitation Status**: Moderately Fished

Mainly a recreational species, but also a small targeted commercial fishery. Fishing mortality is estimated to be about half the natural mortality rate.

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<th>Scientific Name</th>
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<td><em>Ophthalmolepis lineolatus</em></td>
<td>southern maori wrasse</td>
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**Background**

The southern maori wrasse (*Ophthalmolepis lineolatus*) is a small endemic labrid commonly found on the temperate coastal rocky reefs of southern Australia from southern Queensland to southern Western Australia. Maori wrasse are carnivorous and are more frequently found in reef habitats dominated by sponges than in kelp forest or urchin-grazed barrens. Adult maori wrasse are also more abundant with increasing depth down to 20m where they may form loose aggregations, but can be found as deep as 60m.

Like other members of the family Labridae they are protogynous hermaphrodites. They are sexually dimorphic with males and females differing in size and colour. Juveniles mature as females at approximately 18 cm total length (TL) and 2 years of age. Females change to the terminal phase male at a length of approximately 30 cm and about 5 years of age. The peak reproductive season is from January to March.

Maori wrasse grow quickly, attaining approximately 28 cm total length after 5 years, with growth slowing thereafter. They can reach 45 cm in length and have been aged up to 14 years.

Maori wrasse are important to the recreational fishery in NSW and ranked within the top 10 species by number retained during both years of a survey of offshore trailerboat fishers (Steffe *et al.*, 1996). They are not considered an important commercial species with reported landings averaging around 2.5 tonnes per year from line fishing methods.
Additional Notes

- Maori wrasse is estimated to be among the top 10 species in recreational landings in NSW. There is also a small commercial harvest (less than 5 t annually).
- Significant biological data are available for this species (Morton, 2007; Stewart and Hughes, 2008), together with some commercial and recreational length frequency data.
- Maori wrasses mature first as females at about 18 cm TL, and change sex to males between 27 and 34 cm TL.
- Maori wrasses are not subject to a minimum legal length or any specific bag limit in NSW waters.

Catch

Recreational Catch of Southern Maori Wrasse

The annual recreational harvest of southern maori wrasse in NSW is likely to lie between 20 and 30 t. This estimate is based upon the results of the offshore trailer boat recreational survey (Steffe et al. 2003) undertaken by I & I NSW.

Historical Landings of Southern Maori Wrasse

[Graph showing historical landings]

Commercial landings (including available historical records) of southern maori wrasse for NSW from 1993/94 to 2008/09 for all fishing methods.

Landings by Commercial Fishery of Southern Maori Wrasse

[Graph showing landings]

Reported landings of southern maori wrasse 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 Southern Maori Wrasse

[Graph showing growth curve]

Growth curve of southern maori wrasse using parameters from Stewart and Hughes (2008). Lengths are presented as total length (TL).
Length Frequency of Southern Maori Wrasse - Commercial Fishery

The length distribution of southern maori wrasse landed by NSW commercial fishers in 2004/05 was comprised mainly of fish between 25 and 35 cm total length (TL). There is no minimum legal length for southern maori wrasse in NSW.

Length Frequency of Southern Maori Wrasse - Recreational Fishery

The length distribution of southern maori wrasse landed by recreational trailer-boat fishers between 1993 and 1996 was comprised mainly of fish between 25 and 35 cm total length (TL). There is no minimum legal length for southern maori wrasse in NSW.

Further Reading


Please visit the CSIRO website, http://www.marine.csiro.au/caab/ and search for the species code (CAAB) 37 384040, common name or scientific name to find further information.