Tiger Flathead
(*Platycephalus richardsoni*)

**Exploitation Status**

Fully Fished

Predominantly a Commonwealth fishery, although significant landings are made by NSW trawlers north of Sydney. Exploitation status was adopted from the Commonwealth where a quantitative stock assessment has been developed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Standard Name</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Platycephalus richardsoni</em></td>
<td>tiger flathead</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Background**

Tiger flathead (*Platycephalus richardsoni*), occur in ocean waters from northern NSW to Tasmania, at depths of 40 to 300 m. They can easily be confused with a similar species, the ‘toothy’ or ‘gold-spot’ flathead (*P. aurimaculatus*), which is common in the southern part of the range, especially in eastern Bass Strait. Trawling for fish off NSW originally concentrated on targeting tiger flathead, and the species remains significant in recent trawl landings despite being overfished in the 1950s and 1960s.

In NSW, tiger flathead are not taken in significant quantities by any other commercial fisheries, however over 20 t are estimated to be taken annually by recreational and charter boat fishers. Tiger flathead is included in the ‘flathead’ Total Allowable Catch for the Commonwealth Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery, which in 2008 was set at about 2850 t.

The biology and population dynamics of tiger flathead have been studied in detail since the species was first fished over 80 years ago. Growth rates and general biology have been well documented, and there is a reasonable level of monitoring information available for Commonwealth catches. Information is also available from monitoring of the size composition of catches taken under NSW jurisdiction in the early 1990s and for some recent years.

Tiger flathead is a moderately long lived species reaching a maximum age of about 15 years. Females grow larger (60 cm fork length, FL) than males (50 cm FL). Tiger flathead mature at 3 to 5 years of age (approximately 30 to 35 cm FL) and they have an extended spawning period from spring to autumn. Mature females may produce up to 2.5 million eggs. Little is known about the early life history of tiger flathead.
**Additional Notes**

- NSW landings declined from 200 t in 2006/07 to about 120 t in 2007/08 in association with a large decline in reported fishing effort, however catch rates remained relatively high and landings returned to about 200 t in 2008/09.

- Size composition monitoring of NSW commercial landings was recommenced in 2008.

- Commonwealth has a robust assessment that indicates the species is not overfished and is not subject to overfishing (current catch is close to the long term sustainable yield).

- Some recent biological information on growth and mortality rates is available from studies conducted in the Sydney/Newcastle area.

- There is a minimum legal length of 33 cm total length for tiger flathead and a combined recreational bag limit of 20 for all flathead (including only 10 dusky flathead).

**Catch**

**Recreational Catch of Tiger Flathead**

The annual recreational harvest of tiger flathead in NSW is likely to lie between 20 and 60 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.

**Historical Landings of Tiger Flathead**

Commercial landings (including available historical records) of tiger flathead for NSW from 1946/47 to 2008/09 for all fishing methods. Note that the decline in reported catch during the 1990s was due to changes in catch recording requirements for fishers with both NSW and Commonwealth licences.

**Growth Curves of Tiger Flathead**

Growth curve of tiger flathead using parameters from Cui *et al.* (2005). Lengths are presented as total length (TL).
The length distribution of tiger flathead landed by NSW commercial fishers has been very stable since the 1990s, and comprises mainly fish between 33 and 50 cm fork length (FL). The minimum legal length of tiger flathead in NSW is 33 cm total length (approximately 32 cm FL).

**Further Reading**


Please visit the CSIRO website, http://www.marine.csiro.au/caab/ and search for the species code (CAAB) 37 296001, common name or scientific name to find further information.