



NSW Research Angler Program

Issue 11 July 2016

Welcome to the NSW Research Angler Program newsletter – providing you, the research anglers and spearfishers of NSW, feedback on the data you are collecting by donating your frames to research.

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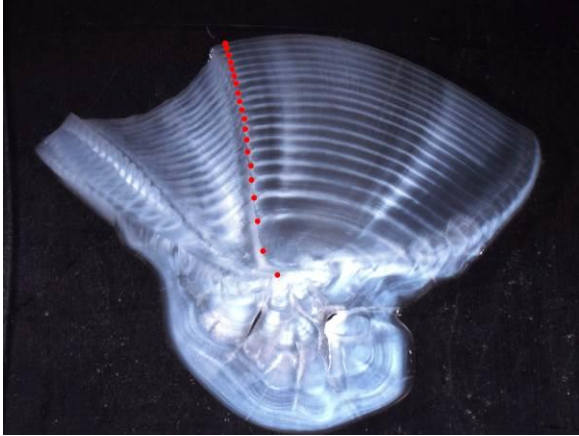
Notable Donations from Autumn 2016

Autumn each year is a special time for NSW fishos. The weather is great, the water is still warm and there are plenty of options available – from dusky flathead in the estuaries to tailor off the beaches, kings off the stones to marauding schools of mackerel offshore – there’s something out there to suit just about everyone’s fishing tastes. Autumn 2016 again lived up to its billing as one the best times of year to be out there with rod (or spear) in hand with some fantastic catches and some fantastic donations to the NSW Research Angler Program.

Right: Sal Nahle from **Drummoyne Best Bait & Tackle** in the shop with a giant 158 cm metro Sydney mullock. Photo courtesy Sal Nahle.



Things kicked off in typical autumn-style when Sal Nahle from [Drummoyne Best Bait & Tackle](#) managed to land his PB mullet in early March. Analysis of one of its donated otoliths revealed a ripe age of 18 years, which means that Sal's fish may have been stalking the waters of Botany Bay since before the turn of the millennium! Drummoyne Best Bait & Tackle is one of the NSW RAP's newest tackleshop drop-off points for donated frames, so while you're in there dropping off your frames, don't forget to ask Sal for a few tips – he can clearly catch them!



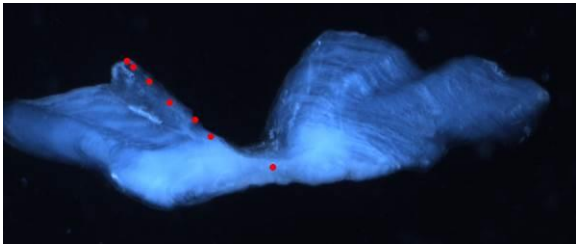
Above: Now that's a good lookin' otolith! Otoliths aren't much easier to estimate the age of a fish from than this one from Sal Nahle's just legal 18 year old Botany Bay mullet.

Right: Now that's a good lookin' fish! Sal Nahle proves that if you know what you're doing, trophy metro mullet are possible, despite coming from one of Australia's most fished waterways. Photo courtesy Sal Nahle.



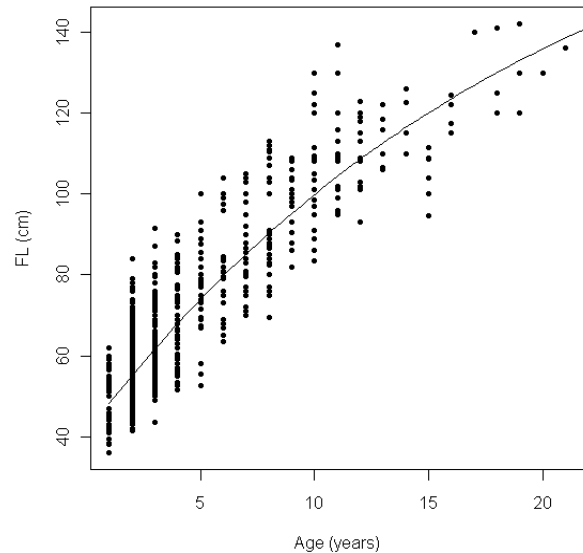
And just to prove that's it's not 'only about mullet' at the NSW RAP is a thumping 127 cm yellowtail kingfish caught off the rocks south of Sydney during autumn by NSW Fisheries Research Scientist John Stewart. After being hooked in just 8 m of water using 20 lb leader and after a 30+ minute fight, eventually the 19 kg beauty was safely landed. This turned out to be not just a PB king for John, but a record breaking king as despite its serious size; the fish was estimated to be just 6 years old!

Left: John Stewart with a hefty 127 cm and 19 kg of Sydney south yellowtail kingfish. Photo courtesy John Stewart



Above: The otolith section from John's extremely fast growing 127 cm 6 year old kingfish.

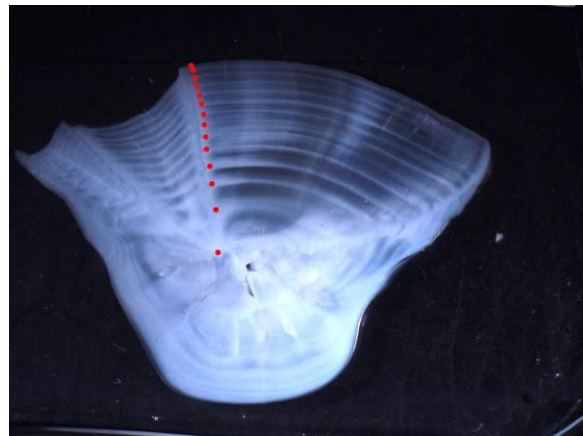
Right: Size-at-age data for yellowtail kingfish in NSW. The line represents average growth of the species in NSW.



As can be seen from the above graph of size-at-age for yellowtail kingfish in NSW, at 127 cm (113 cm fork length), this particular fish is far larger than any other 6 year old so far recorded in NSW waters and has grown at an astonishing average of ~27 cm per year. Yet another reason why data provided by recreational fishers is so important for NSW DPI scientists who assess the stocks of these species, even if the fishers and the scientists are sometimes the same person! You can find the current assessment for yellowtail kingfish (and all other exploited species in NSW) [here](#).



Sans Souci Dolphin Paul Marsh with his PB jewy of 141 cm and 26 kg taken from a Newcastle gutter and estimated to be 12 years old. Photo courtesy Paul Marsh.



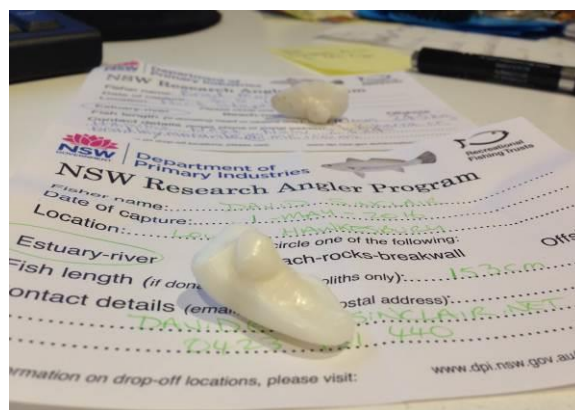
The cross section from one of Paul Marsh's 141 cm Newcastle mulloway otoliths showing the twelve growth rings counted to accurately estimate its age.

And just to prove that's it's not 'only about anglers' at the NSW RAP (we love our spearos too!) is another PB fish from autumn 2016 in the form of a cracking 141 cm mulloway donated by [Sans Souci Dolphins Spearfishing Club](#) stalwart Paul Marsh. Paul's Newcastle jewie was definitely big at 26.3 kg, but not particularly old, coming in at an estimated 12 years of age. This extremely fast growth puts this fish just 4 cm shy of the largest 12 year old mulloway so far recorded in NSW waters.

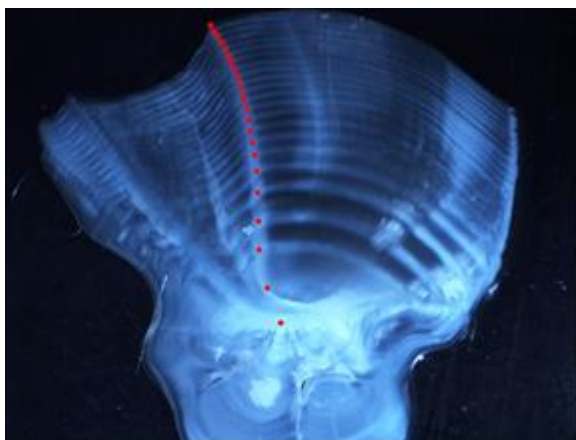


David Sinclair with 153 cm and 35 kg of lower Hawkesbury River land-based mullet. Just the fourth 21 year old mullet so far recorded in NSW waters. Photo courtesy David Sinclair.

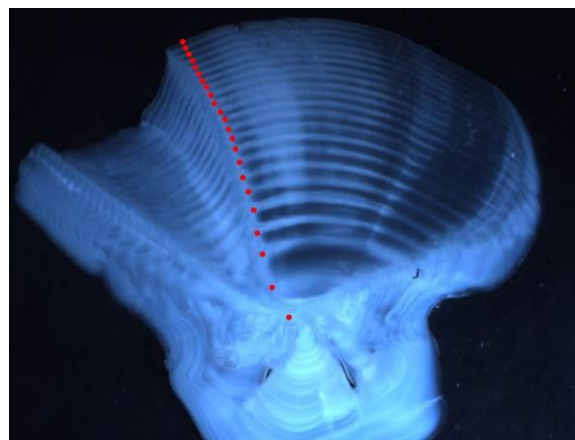
And the incredible run of big, old mullet donated in autumn 2016 to the NSW RAP didn't end there! We were indeed fortunate to receive the otoliths from a fine pair of 21 year olds caught within just 2 days of one another in early April. Both fish came from classic mullet hotspots with Brad Morante's 24.5 kg 137 cm barrel from Port Stephens and David Sinclair's enormous 153 cm 35 kg fish from the Hawkesbury River. Both fish were born in 1995 and both grew to truly impressive sizes; exactly why David's fish grew slightly larger than Brad's is likely due to a multitude of factors including environmental temperature, food quality and quantity, sex, behaviour and probably most importantly, genetics. Regardless, these two fish were the just the third and fourth 21 year old mullet so far recorded from NSW waters and an important addition to our knowledge of this iconic southern sportfish.



Big jewy jewels! The otoliths from David Sinclair's 153 cm Hawkesbury fish and Brad Morante's 137 Port Stephens fish prior to processing in the lab.



The otolith section from Brad Morante's 137 cm Port Stephens fish estimated to be a ripe 21 years of age.

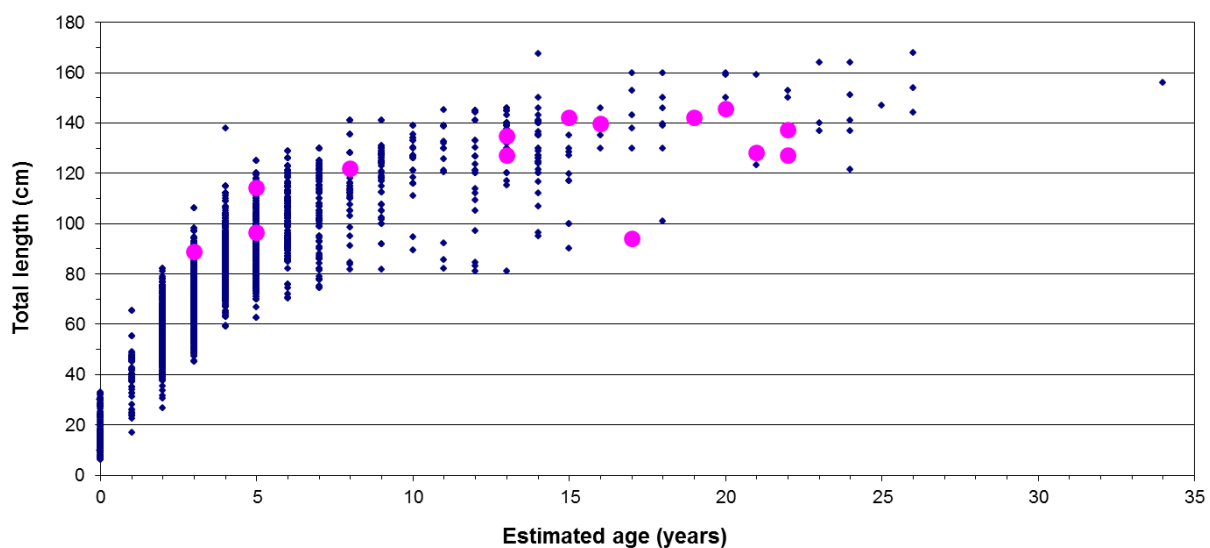


The otolith section from David Sinclair's 153 cm Hawkesbury River fish also estimated to be 21 years old.

Blasts from the (distant) past!

This season's "Blast from the Past" comes in the form of not one, not two, but thirteen mullet otoliths collected between 1968 and 1977 by veteran mullet fisher Bill Blade. Bill's jewels and meticulously recorded information on each fish were generously donated to the NSW Research Angler Program by a younger mullet tragic who shares the same name, son Paul Blade, who has already donated more than 60 of his own mullet otoliths to research! These historic otoliths (and corresponding lengths in feet and weight in pounds!) provide a tantalising glimpse of what the NSW mullet population may have looked like 40-50 years ago. With 8 of the donated fish over 40 old-fashioned pounds (18 kg), Bill certainly knew how to catch a decent jewy as can be seen from the below figure of size-at-age for mullet in NSW with Bill's fish overlayed.

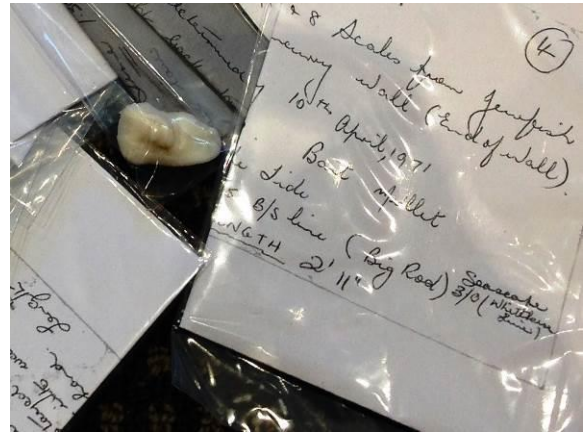
Size-at-age data for mullet in NSW: the blue points represent the data Fisheries NSW currently has for mullet with Bill Blade's historic fish overlayed in purple.



One of the most interesting features of these fish are their ages – 8 of Bill's (admittedly large) fish were 15 years of age or older with a fish each estimated to be 19, 20 and 21 years old along with two 22 year olds. This compares with our current data for mullet in NSW which features just 49 individuals estimated to be older than 15 years of age. Particularly interesting is one fish, a fat 94 cm fish caught from the Harrington breakwall in April 1973 which was estimated to be 17 years old, making it easily the oldest fish of this size so far recorded in NSW waters! Makes you wonder how many more 'old' mullet there might have been out there "back in the day"?



The otolith section from a 127 cm mulloway caught at Dunbogan in April 1973. This 40 lb fish was caught by Janet Blade using a handline and was estimated to be 22 years old!



Meticulously recorded data and otoliths from some of Bill Blade's historic mulloway catches from the late 60s and 70s generously donated to the NSW RAP.

Many thanks to Bill and Paul Blade for providing the NSW RAP with such fascinating information – yesterday or yesteryear, any and all data we can collect on recreationally-caught mulloway will be gratefully accepted.

If you have some old mulloway jewels lying around and you reliably know the lengths of the fish they came from as well as the date and location of capture, please feel free to contact 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 for you to mail your “Blasts from the Past” in to us for analysis.

Project Progress – Autumn 2016

A great autumn's mulloway hunting saw another 97 recreationally-caught mulloway generously donated to the NSW RAP. This brings the total since the start of the program (in September 2013) to 958 fish – an awesome effort!

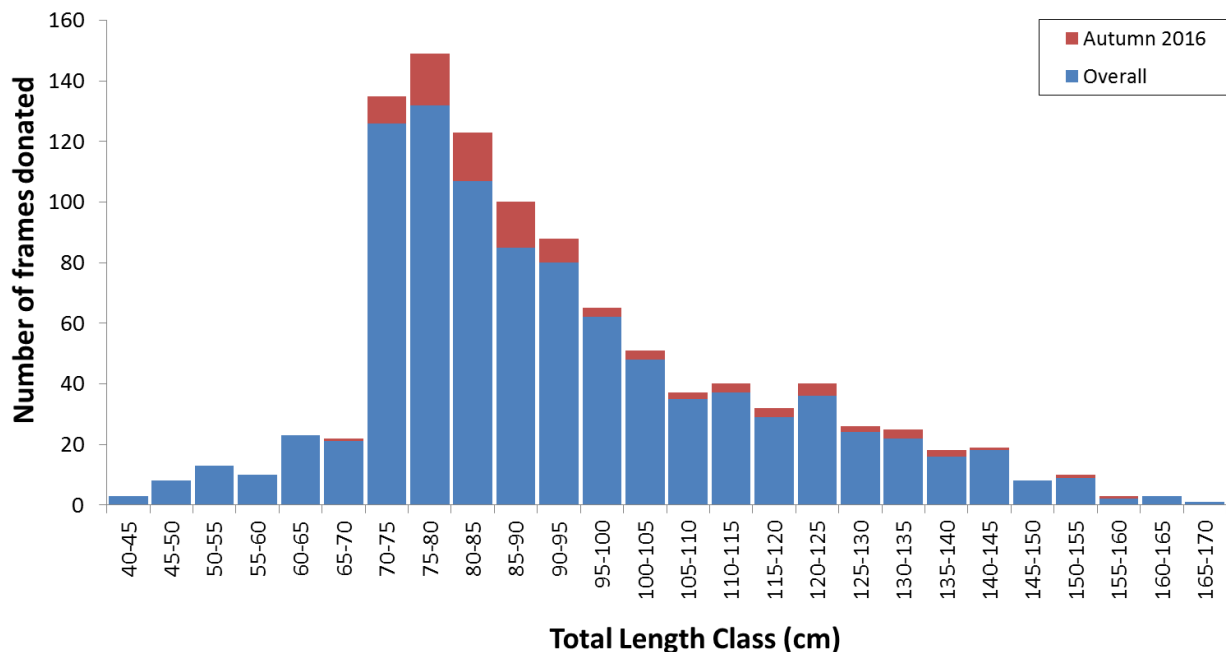
Most (70%) of donations were again from mulloway between 70 and 100 cm, but another 10 fish larger than 130 cm provided yet more excellent data on the largest size class of mulloway in the NSW population. The two largest mulloway donated over autumn, a 153 cm fish from the Hawkesbury and 158 cm fish from Botany Bay are two of the largest recorded in NSW so far!

We also had 51 snapper, 20 Spanish mackerel, 15 spotted mackerel and 197 tailor donated to the RAP over autumn. Stay tuned for updates on these species in future RAP newsletters and check out the info on tailor and tropical mackerel research later in this newsletter (pages 10 & 11).

Right: Antony Gould processes the frame from a big Spanish mackerel; one of 370 frames, heads or otoliths donated to the NSW RAP over autumn 2016.

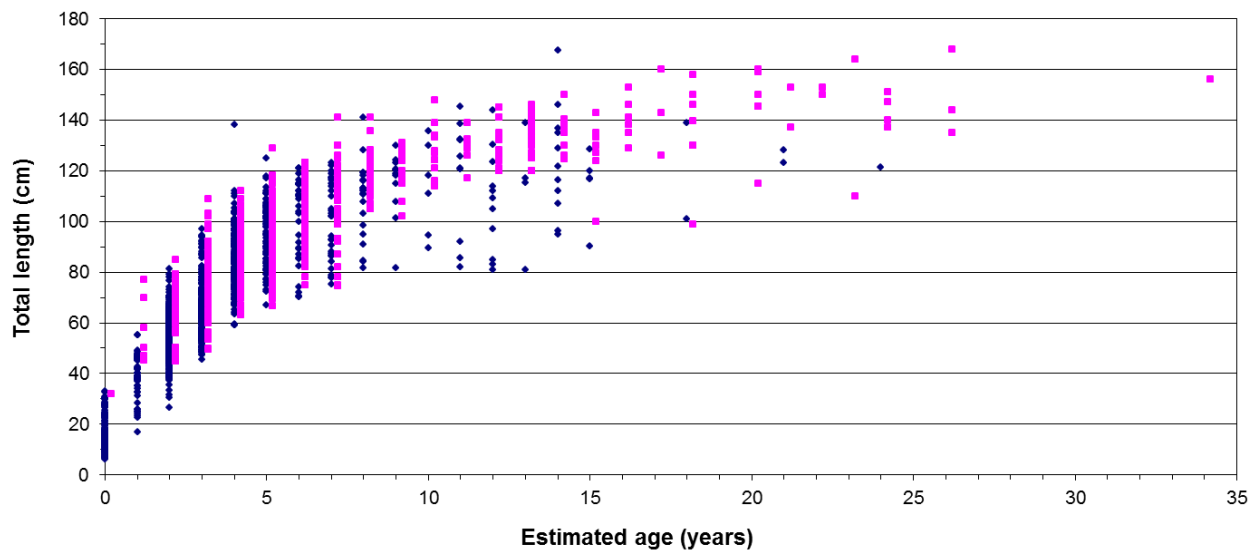


Lengths of mulloway donated to the NSW Research Angler Program in autumn 2016 and overall since its commencement in September 2013.

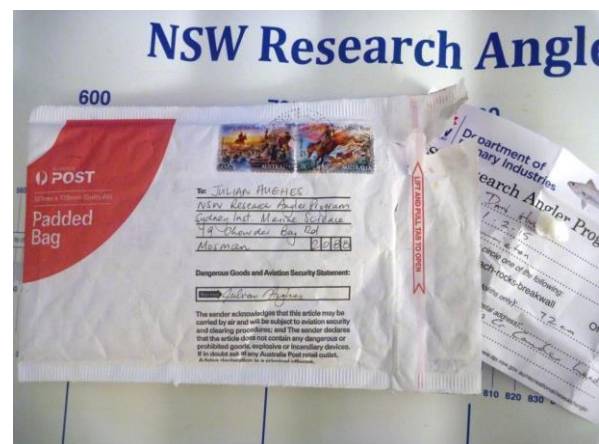


Now we haven't seen this figure in a while but it really does beautifully illustrate how data collected from donations of fish caught by recreational fishers has improved our understanding of the mullet population in NSW. The graph below shows the sizes and corresponding ages of all the mullet we have collected this data for in NSW from both commercial and recreational sources. Since the start of the NSW RAP in September 2013, the size and age information we have for mullet in NSW is now far more complete; with plenty of data on the oldest and largest individuals in the population. This situation has arisen purely as a result of the participation of enthusiastic anglers and spearfishers keen to make a positive contribution to the long term sustainability of their sport.

Size-at-age data for mullet in NSW: the blue points represent the data Fisheries NSW had for mullet prior to the start of the program (mainly from commercial sources). The purple points represent data from recreationally-caught fish donated to the program since the commencement of the NSW RAP in September 2013.



And don't forget that you can now post the jewels from your mullet catches 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 jewel 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! Even if you are an avid collector of jewie jewels as mementos of past mullet conquests, the good news is we only need a single otolith from each fish – so you can now contribute vital information on the health of the mullet stock and still keep a special reminder of a special fish.





The head of a donated Spanish mackerel is processed in the NSW DPI Ageing Laboratory. And yes, that is a hacksaw!

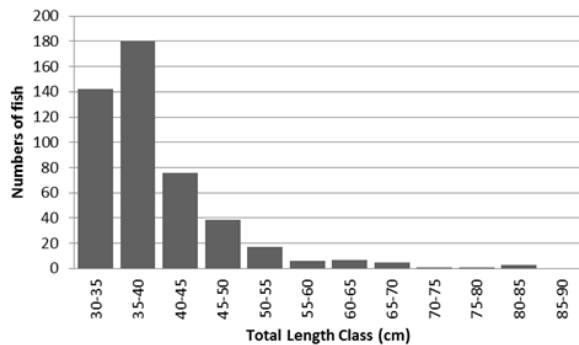


A box of donated dusky flathead (*Platycephalus fuscus*) frames donated to the NSW RAP over autumn.

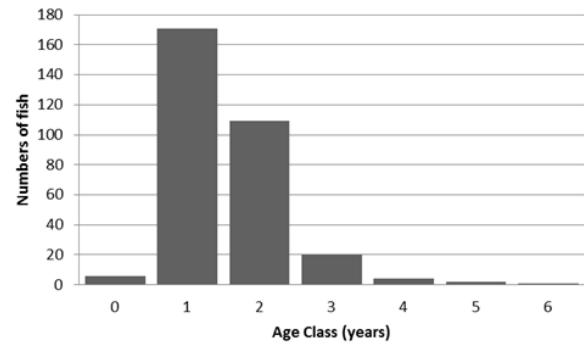
Even if it is only one frame, one head, or a single jewel, we are willing to do (almost) anything to get it!

Tailor research update

The [Recreational Fishing Trust](#)-funded research project into the biology and fishery for tailor in NSW continues to be supplied with top quality samples collected by keen NSW Research Anglers. Almost 200 tailor donated to the NSW RAP have been incorporated into the study to date and have already produced some very important results. These fish have ranged in size from 30 cm up to 84.3 cm, including 40 individuals larger than 50 cm. The vast majority of tailor (70%) so far sampled have been between 30 and 40 cm in length with very few tailor larger than 50 cm appearing in commercial or recreational catches. The age composition of these sampled fish is not surprisingly, primarily 1-2 year old individuals with much smaller numbers of 3, 4 or 5 year olds, together with a single 6 year old.



Length composition of tailor collected to date from NSW waters.



Age composition of tailor collected to date from NSW waters.

A special mention must be made of the incredibly dedicated efforts of the [Australian Surfcaster](#) group who have caught and donated a large proportion of the recreationally-caught fish to this study. The information we are getting from these samples are absolutely invaluable, but we always need more, so if you pick up a few choppers, or even an elbow-slapping “greenback” over winter, please drop the frame into one of our participating drop-off locations (or contact research.angler@dpi.nsw.gov.au, (02) 9435 4671) to contribute to this essential research being carried out by Fisheries NSW and University of NSW scientists. Stay tuned for further updates on the progress of fascinating project in future Research Angler Program newsletters.



Above: The frame from a North Coast tailor with ovaries in spawning condition donated by the guys from [Australian Surfcaster](#) over autumn 2016. Photo courtesy Ben Van der Woude.

Right: Thumping big greenback tailor like these appear to be quite uncommon in NSW waters. Photo courtesy Ben Van der Woude.



NSW RAP mackerel donations!

Autumn is a well-known time of year for chasing mackerel in northern NSW and this one certainly lived up to its reputation with plenty of spotties and Spaniards about whenever the EAC nudged the coast. Fortunately for scientists at both NSW DPI and [Queensland Department of Agriculture & Fisheries](#), we managed to have quite a few frames from these iconic species donated to the NSW RAP which will be used in a joint East Coast stock assessment for both species. Frames from some 20 seriously solid Spanish mackerel between 103 and a whopping 133 cm in length kept the RAP team busy removing their tiny otoliths (and avoiding those not-so-tiny teeth!). Fifteen spotted mackerel up to an enormous 109 cm also managed to make their way to our lab, marking an enormously successful start for the newest two species to the program.



Sans Souci Dolphin and serial frame donor Evan Leeson with a pending NSW spearfishing record spotted mackerel (*Scomberomorus munroi*) of 109 cm and 7.25 kg donated to the NSW RAP in autumn. Photo courtesy Evan Leeson.



Nice bycatch! One hundred and thirty three centimetres of prime north coast Spanish mackerel (*Scomberomorus commerson*) taken whilst chasing autumn mulloway off the rocks. Photo courtesy Paul Blade.

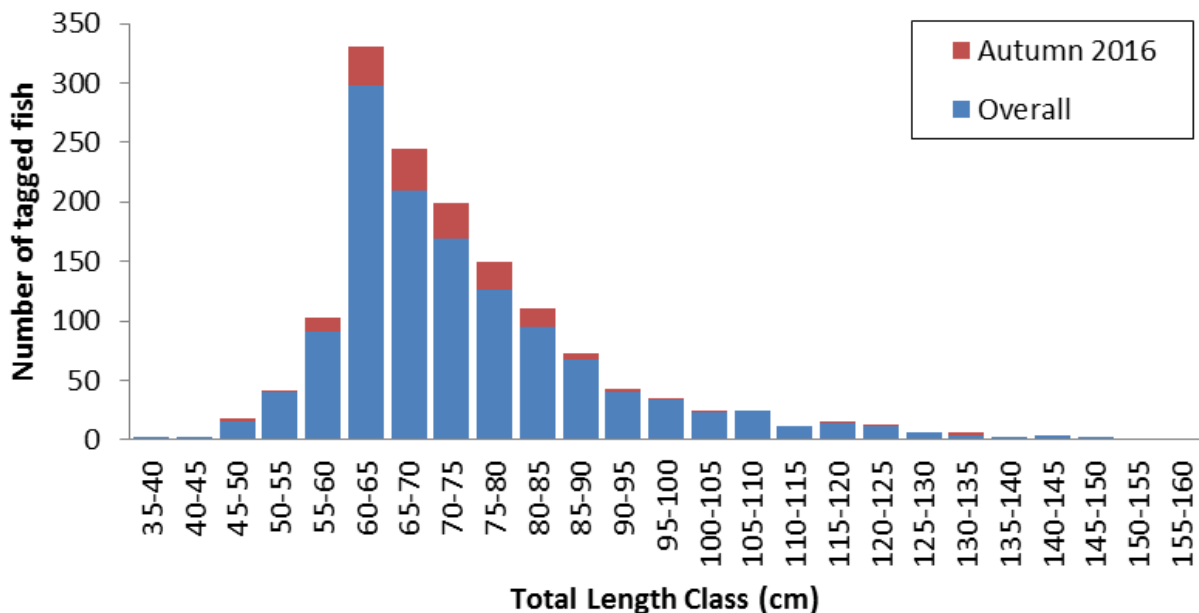
As with our other species, the frames (or heads) can be donated to the NSW RAP at any of our participating [drop-off points](#). All data collected will contribute to the joint assessment of the East Coast stocks of these two awesome fish species in collaboration with the [Queensland Department of Agriculture & Fisheries](#).

NSW RAP – ANSA Tagging Project Update

Autumn 2016 turned out to be a real ripper for the NSW RAP-ANSA mulloway tagging project with a new record of 168 tagged mulloway recorded! The arrival of tag cards from an additional 131 fish tagged over summer 2015-16 brings the current overall number of tagged jewies swimming around out there to an astonishing 1465 fish. Eight of these fish now wearing a NSW DPI Gamefish Tag were more than 100 cm in length including 2 fish over 130 cm and a new record largest fish at 155.5 cm! If you squint, you can just make out these trophy fish as thin red lines at the tops of the bars for fish at the right hand end of the below figure of the numbers of tagged mulloway of each size class.

And 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 in autumn 2016 and overall since its commencement March 2014.



Despite the enormous popularity of chasing mulloway in metropolitan Sydney's waterways, the number of autumn fish tagged in these estuaries clearly demonstrates that there are plenty out there, if you know how to catch them! And four guys who clearly do know how to do this in the "big smoke" were four of our "Top Five" taggers for autumn; Peter Rothwell (29 fish), Gianni Lo Giudice (24), Chris Cleaver (15) and Seamus McCleave (12) had a combined tally of 80 fish between them, almost 50% of all the tagged mulloway from autumn! Another guy who also knows how to catch 'em is Kyle Worley who not only managed to tag 12 lovely fish from slightly further north in Lake Macquarie, but also found time to donate the frames from eight of his retained fish for age assessment!

Top Five taggers for autumn 2016 (as of 31 May 2016):

Tagger	No. fish tagged	Region
Peter Rothwell	29	Sydney
Gianni Lo Guidice	24	Sydney
Chris Cleaver	15	Sydney
Seamus McCleave	12	Sydney
Kyle Worley	12	Lake Macquarie

Top Five taggers overall (as of 31 May 2016):

Tagger	No. fish tagged	Region
Chris Cleaver	249	Everywhere!
Dan Selby	111	Sydney
Mark Pirie	89	Yamba
Paul Blade	85	Coffs Harbour
Ivan Maric	68	Sydney

Top Five largest fish tagged for autumn 2016 (as of 31 May 2016):

Tagger	Total length (cm)	System
"Tagger 86"	155.5	Hawkesbury River
Kieran Hill	134	Newcastle
Lachlan Munro	131	Nambucca Heads
Ivan Maric	123	Botany Bay
Nathan Debono	118	Newcastle

Top Five largest fish tagged overall (as of 31 May 2016):

Tagger	Total length (cm)	System	Season
"Tagger 86"	155.5	Hawkesbury River	Autumn 2016
"Tagger 86"	152	Hawkesbury River	Spring 2015
"Tagger 86"	147	Hawkesbury River	Spring 2015
"Tagger 86"	145	Hawkesbury River	Spring 2015
Dan Selby	144	Hawkesbury River	Winter 2014



Spring 2015 turned out to be a real purple patch for the mysterious mullet hunter known only as “Tagger 86” when his exploits over just two months saw him catch and tag four of the five largest mullet so far tagged in NSW waters. Well, this autumn he was up to his old tricks again successfully tagging a new record largest mullet of 155.5 cm beating his previous record by 3.5 cm! This wasn’t the only big jewy to end autumn 2016 wearing a tag with familiar names Kieran Hill, Lachlan Monro, Ivan Maric and Nathan Debono all putting in some big efforts and tagging some big fish in the process. An absolutely phenomenal effort from all these guys as well as all the other passionate mullet anglers who managed to put a tag in a mullet this autumn.

Mullet magnet ‘Tagger 86’ was at it again over autumn tagging a new record largest mullet of 155.5 cm. Photo courtesy ‘Tagger 86’

Not only were a record number of mullet tagged in autumn 2016, but there were also a record number of recaptures. The 24 recaptures made over autumn brings the overall number of recaptures since the start of the project (in March 2014) to 98 at the most excellent recapture rate of 6.6%.

One of these recaptured mullet had a particularly famous recent history appearing on the front cover of the August 2015 edition of the illustrious [Fishing World](#) magazine (pictured at right). The thumping 136 cm fish dubbed “One Eye”, due to its missing an eye, was caught spinning off the Broken Bay rocks in April 2015 by Dean Overhall. Tagged and lovingly revived by Dean and accomplice Luke Reilly, the fish was successfully released to fight another day. That ‘other day’ came almost a year later in March this autumn when it was recaptured by regular RAP frame donor Nick Waltisbuhl at Box Head. Fortunately for us, Nick not only reported the recapture, but also donated the frame to the RAP so that some more information could be retrieved from the fish. Analysis of one of its otoliths allowed researchers to estimate its age at an impressive 15 years, making it one of just seven 15 year old mullet so far recorded in NSW! Even though old “One Eye” is no longer swimming around out there, the priceless information we were able to get from this one fish will make a small, but important contribution to our knowledge of the movements, post-release mortality, age and growth of the species in NSW waters. To read more about “One Eye”, check out Luke Reilly’s excellent [article](#) at [Fishing World](#) online.





Dean Overhall carefully revives “One Eye”, a tagged 136 cm 14 year old mulloway caught spinning the Broken Bay rocks prior to release in April 2015. Photo courtesy Luke Reilly.



Three hundred and thirty four days later and Nick Waltisbuhl proudly displays “One Eye”, now 15 years old, caught at Box Head in March 2016. Photo courtesy Nick Waltisbuhl.

Autumn also saw the continuation of a curious trend in movement patterns for mulloway in this part of eastern Australia whereby fish tagged in and around Sydney have been recaptured ~100 km north in the Hunter region. Prior to this autumn, four fish had made this interesting northward journey. These were joined this autumn by another two fish both tagged in Hawkesbury River by [Sydney Sportfishing Adventures](#)’ Dan Selby and clients within one week of each other in March 2015. Exactly one year later, the first of these fish was recaptured by Ricky Turner in Newcastle Harbour growing from 67 to 84 cm in the process. The second fish was also recaptured in Newcastle Harbour by John Sherry 412 days later in April. A fish which appears to be on its way north was another “Hawkesbury-Selby special” tagged in October 2015 and recaptured by Glenn Proudlock in Lake Macquarie in May at 76 cm.



NSW RAP-ANSA tagger Brad Gibson inserts a tag into the shoulder of a chunky lure-caught Port Kembla mulloway. Photo courtesy Brad Gibson



Brad Gibson helps a freshly tagged mulloway regain its strength boatside just prior to release. Photo courtesy Brad Gibson

Up north, a 90 cm mulloway caught by Brett Cartwright in the Macleay River at South West Rocks had moved some 160 km south from the Clarence River where it had been tagged by Kieran Hill at 85 cm some 316 days earlier. In contrast, a similar sized fish which was at liberty for an identical period of time also tagged by Kieran Hill, this time in the Macleay River, was recaptured in the same system by David Papworth growing from 87 to 95 cm in the process.



Left: A 76 cm mulloway caught by Glenn Proudlock in Lake Macquarie with tag #A599657 was tagged by Dan Selby 227 days earlier in the Hawkesbury River when it was 68 cm. Photo courtesy Glenn Proudlock.



Above: Tag #A599657 showing a bit of algal growth which accumulated in the fish at left's journey from the Hawkesbury River to Lake Macquarie 60 km to the north. Photo courtesy Glenn Proudlock.

Autumn's 24 recaptures also revealed some pretty impressive growth between tag and recap. A 53.5 cm fish tagged by Ivan Maric in Botany Bay in October 2014 was recaptured by Jacob Carnovale in the lower Georges River at 73 cm growing an amazing 19.5 cm in 519 days. Dan Selby's just-legal 72 cm soapie was recaptured 154 days later by Craig Kerr having grown to an impressive 94 cm in the Hawkesbury River. The most impressive increase in size however, occurred for a 77 cm fish tagged in January 2015 by Joel Edwards which was recaptured at the magic 1 m mark in Newcastle Harbour in April.

And just to show the enormous variation that exists in mulloway growth (and all fish for that matter!), were several fish which were clearly at the slower end of the spectrum of mulloway growth rates. A fish tagged by Chris Cleaver and recaptured by Steve Philip grew just 2 cm in almost 9 months in the Georges River and another tagged by Brad Gibson and recaptured by Huw Kearney grew just 2 cm in 340 days in Port Kembla. And finally, two fish were recaptured having not grown a single cm; a 90 cm fish tagged by Luke Reilly and recaptured 76 days later by Craig Black in Brisbane Water and an 87 cm fish tagged by Chris Cleaver and recaptured 126 days later by Alen Hussein in the Georges River.

Tagged mullet recaptures for autumn 2016 (as of 31 May 2016):

Tagging angler	Total length (cm)	Tagging location	Recapture angler	Recapture location	Total length (cm)	Days at liberty
Andrew Talbot	62	Port Hacking	Admir Mujkanovic	Cronulla Beach	72	306
Dan Selby	67	Hawkesbury River	Ricky Turner	Newcastle Harbour	84	365
Luke Reilly	90	Brisbane Water	Craig Black	Brisbane Water	90	76
Kieran Hill	85	Clarence River	Brett Cartwright	Macleay River	90	316
Dean Overhall	136	Brisbane Water	Nick Waltisbuhl	Broken Bay	130	334
Kieran Hill	87	Macleay River	David Papworth	Macleay River	95	318
Dan Selby	72	Hawkesbury River	Craig Kerr	Hawkesbury River	94	154
Dan Selby	82	Hawkesbury River	Kurt Jeffrey	Hawkesbury River	82	257
Ivan Maric	53.5	Botany Bay	Jacob Carnovale	Georges River	73	519
Mark Pirie	67	Clarence River	Gary Davis	Clarence River	71	201
George Anastasiadis	58	Parramatta River	Matteo Polifroni	Parramatta River	71.5	132
Joel Edwards	77	Newcastle Harbour	n/a	Newcastle Harbour	100	441
Brad Gibson	63	Port Kembla	Huw Kearney	Port Kembla	65	340
Dan Selby	109	Hawkesbury River	John Sherry	Newcastle Harbour	n/a	412
Chris Cleaver	70	Georges River	Mohamed Taha	George River	79	n/a
Chris Cleaver	87	Georges River	Alen Hussein	Georges River	87	126
Chris Cleaver	77	Botany Bay	Matt Fieni	Georges River	80	n/a
Ivan Maric	76	Botany Bay	Warren Miller	Botany Bay	77	28
Brad Gibson	60	Port Kembla	Huw Kearney	Port Kembla	63	70
Chris Cleaver	63	Botany Bay	Ivan Maric	Georges River	71	569
Gianni Lo Guidice	64	Parramatta River	George Dardagos	Parramatta River	69	53
Chris Cleaver	80	Georges River	Steve Philip	Georges River	82	264
Dan Selby	68	Hawkesbury River	Glenn Proudlock	Lake Macquarie	76	227
Bob Gordon	70	Brisbane Water	Richard Monaghan	North Entrance Beach	82	n/a

Next time you're out chasing mullet, keep an eye out for one of our yellow NSW DPI tags. Remember that the tag may be fouled with algae, and not quite as bright as this one from a fish which was tagged by Kyle Worley in Lake Macquarie and recaptured in Newcastle Harbour this past autumn.



If you are fortunate enough to catch a tagged mullet, 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 Winter 2016 NSW RAP Newsletter!

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.

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!

Upcoming Presentations

- BCF West Gosford – June 25

The “Top Fives”!

Our sincerest thanks to the following dedicated mullet Research Anglers and spearfishers who have made it into our “Top Five” lists of frame donors overall and those for autumn 2016.

We were the fortunate beneficiaries of a very successful autumn of mullet-hunting by David Birt around Newcastle; not just because David was generous enough to donate 16 fish of his own skilfully-caught fish up to 108 cm to the program, but also because he managed to rope in his sons Matthew (4 fish) and Mitchell (3 fish) into the bargain. David also made a special “guest” appearance on [Reel Action](#) and even helped host of the show, Michael ‘Guesty’ Guest’s son Flynn onto a couple of fine mullet, which you “guessed” it, were also donated to the NSW RAP!

As well as catching (and donating) one of the best bycatch species ever caught whilst chasing mullet, a thumping 133 cm Spanish mackerel, NSW RAP’s number one frame donor Paul Blade also managed to add another 9 mullet to 117 cm to his already impressive tally of frame donations. Kyle Worley is another regular harasser of his local mullet population who not only tagged 12 fish over autumn, but donated frames from a further 8 from Lake Macquarie alone! Bikrant Gurung was also amongst the action donating frames from 4 metropolitan-caught fish caught including a hefty 126 cm fish from Sydney Harbour estimated to be 9 years old.

“Top Five” donors autumn 2016 (as of 31 May 2016):

Donor	No. frames donated	Region
David Birt	16	Newcastle
Paul Blade	9	Coffs Harbour
Kyle Worley	8	Lake Macquarie
Matthew Birt	4	Newcastle
Bikrant Gurung	4	Sydney

“Top Five” donors overall (as of 31 May 2016):

Donor	No. frames donated	Region
Paul Blade	64	Coffs Harbour
James Sakker	34	Coffs Harbour
David Birt	33	Newcastle
Kyle Worley	23	Lake Macquarie
Murat Atlihan	23	Sydney

“Top Five” largest fish donated and associated ages autumn 2016 (as of 31 May 2016):

Donor	Total length (cm)	Estimated age (years)	Region
Sal Nahle	158	18	Sydney
David Sinclair	153	21	Sydney
Paul Marsh	141	12	Newcastle
Rhys Lyon	138	14	Crescent Head
Brad Morante	137	21	Port Stephens

“Top Five” largest mulloway donated and associated ages overall (as of 31 May 2016):

Donor	Total length (cm)	Estimated age (years)	Region	Season
Nathan Debono	168	26	Newcastle	Winter 2015
Adam Price	164	24	Sydney	Spring 2013
Keith Kneebone	160	20	Sydney	Autumn 2014
Mark McCabe	159	21	Sydney	Spring 2013
Sal Nahle	158	18	Sydney	Autumn 2016

Sal Nahle's massive Botany Bay beast featured earlier in the newsletter was the largest fish donated from autumn at 158 cm, but was beaten into first place in the 'Top Five' oldest fish by a fine pair of 21 year olds (also mentioned earlier) donated by David Sinclair and Brad Morante. And just to demonstrate that 'it's not all about size' were two smaller fish (although still trophies by most standards) donated by Nick Waltisbuhl and Peter Alexander. Both fish were estimated to be 15 years old, despite being slightly smaller at 130 and 124 cm, respectively. Flying the flag for the spearos over autumn was Sans Souci Dolphin's Paul Marsh with a 141 cm fish estimated to be just 12 years old and Rhys Lyons' 138 cm 29 kg Crescent Head 'barrel' of a mulloway was estimated to be 14 years old.

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

“Top Five” oldest fish donated and associated lengths autumn 2016 (as of 31 May 2016):

Donor	Estimated age (years)	Total length (cm)	Region
David Sinclair	21	153	Sydney
Brad Morante	21	137	Port Stephens
Sal Nahle	18	158	Sydney
Nick Waltisbuhl	15	130	Sydney
Peter Alexander	15	124	South West Rocks

“Top Five” oldest fish donated and associated lengths overall (as of 31 May 2016):

Donor	Estimated age (years)	Total length (cm)	Region	Season
Vaughan Little	34	156	Nowra	Spring 2013
Scott Robson	26	154	Newcastle	Summer 2013-14
Evan Leeson	26	144	Port Macquarie	Autumn 2014
Nathan Debono	26	168	Newcastle	Winter 2015
Marwan Nasr	25	147	Sydney	Spring 2014
Adam Price	24	164	Sydney	Spring 2013
Hari Corliss	24	151	Port Macquarie	Winter 2015
Robert Thorpe	23	137	Newcastle	Autumn 2014
Mark Pirie	23	140	Yamba	Autumn 2014



NSW Research Angler Cameron Doak with 103 cm of lovely Mid-North Coast Spanish mackerel donated to the NSW RAP over autumn. Photo courtesy Cameron Doak.



Dean Overhall holds “One Eye” the 136 cm one-eyed Broken Bay mullet just prior to release when the fish was estimated 14 years old. Photo courtesy Luke Reilly.



A magic metre of prime South Coast silver donated to the NSW RAP by Juan Sauchua. This fish was in superb condition and analysis of its otolith revealed it to be 6 years old. Photo courtesy Juan Sauchua

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. Our most recent additions to our list of participating drop-off points are three of our favourite District Fisheries Offices!

- **Lake Illawarra District Fisheries Office**
43 Reddall Pde, Lake Illawarra
T: (02) 4295 1809
- **Eden Far South District Fisheries Office**
13 Corcora St, Eden
T: (02) 6496 8200 (pictured at right)
- **Hastings District Fisheries Office**
3/22-24 Acacia Ave, Port Macquarie
T: (02) 5524 0600

Our District Fisheries Offices perform a valuable compliance and education service and now these offices will accept your donated frames, but please call to check that the office is attended first before dropping off your frame!



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

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/recreational/researchangler/drop-off-locations>

Monthly Prize Draw Winners!

The lucky monthly NSW Research Angler Program prize winners for autumn 2016 were decided by randomly drawing one frame donor from each month.

Congratulations to the following Research Anglers:

March	Ben Henshaw	(Lake Macquarie)
April	Brad Gibson	(Wollongong)
May	David Sinclair	(Sydney)



Each winner will receive either:

- a \$50 gift voucher generously donated by [MO Tackle Coffs Harbour](#) (for use in-store or online),
- or a mullet-ready lure pack worth \$50 containing a selection of proven hardbody, soft plastic and blade-style mullet-catchers from Storm, Killalure, Berkley and Rupes.

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 (**Mullet, Snapper, Dusky Flathead, Yellowtail Kingfish, Tailor, 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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