



NSW Research Angler Program

Issue 8 September 2015

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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The NSW Research Angler Program goes BIG!

It was a humble beginning for the NSW Research Angler Program when it kicked off in September 2013 with anglers and spearfishers asked to help gather priority information for the management of the mullet stock by donating their frames to research. Just on two years later, the dedication of the state's passionate recreational fishers in gathering some incredible data on the mighty mullet has born some impressive fruit in the form of an extended and expanded NSW RAP! The program has proven so successful with mullet that it has attracted further funding from the Recreational Fishing Trust, been extended for a further 3 years and expanded to include four new key recreational fish species: **snapper**, **yellowtail kingfish**, **dusky flathead** and **tailor** in addition to the existing program for mullet.



Wal Balzan with his monster 86 cm 6.1 kg ‘greenback’ tailor out of St Georges Basin donated to the NSW RAP. Tailor are one of four new species to be added to the NSW RAP from September. How old a tailor this size is will be one of the surprises of an expanded NSW RAP!

All these species have an enormous following in the recreational fishing community and some, if it's possible, may even rival that of mullet! And the similarities don't end there as like mullet, all these species have been identified as priority species for which Fisheries NSW needs better information on the size and age composition of the NSW populations from the recreational fishery. It is hoped that through the involvement of more dedicated rec fishers that we can be as successful improving our knowledge of these new species, and improving their management, as we have been with mullet.



Paul Lennon and his pending NSW record snapper! At 102 cm and 14.51 kg, it will be fascinating to see how old this fish could be once we get hold of the otoliths. Photo courtesy Paul Lennon.



First cab off the rank! The first snapper frame to be donated to the newly expanded NSW RAP, a lovely 6.1 kg fish caught offshore from Port Macquarie.

The huge popularity of these species with the recreational fishing community is already obvious as the first wave of snapper, kingfish and tailor frames have already been enthusiastically donated to the RAP. Some of these donations have been from particularly impressive fish with Wal Balzan's 86 cm 6.1 kg marauding giant tailor from St Georges Basin and Paul Lennon's 102 cm 14.5 kg superhero of a Port Stephens snapper ensuring that the expanded RAP will kick-off with a bang! As for mullet, the largest individuals have the potential to provide us with the most interesting data simply because there is a greater likelihood that a large fish will be old, but we will gratefully accept the frame from any **mullet, snapper, tailor, kingfish** or **dusky flathead**, as long as it's recreationally-caught. And legal of course!

Tailor experts wanted!

As well as generously funding the NSW Research Angler Program, the Recreational Fishing Trust has also recently funded some much-needed research into the **recreational tailor fishery in NSW**. The winter-spring spawning aggregation of tailor off Fraser Island in Queensland is well known to tailor anglers, but is this the only gathering of spawning tailor on the East Coast? We hope to be able to answer this question at the end of the 3 year project, but in order to do this; we need regular samples of ocean-caught tailor from the length of the NSW coast in order to examine changes in reproductive stage of the fish from various regions throughout the year. Commercial catches and frames donated to the NSW RAP can provide us with some of the samples, but as a massively important recreational fish species

we are a much better chance to get the fish we need by recruiting dedicated and knowledgeable tailor anglers to help.

So, if you regularly fish for tailor and would like to help in this critical research on one of NSW's most important recreational fish species, please contact the NSW RAP (T: 9435 4671, E: research.angler@dpi.nsw.gov.au).



Image © Bernard Yau



The project is being undertaken collaboratively between NSW DPI (Fisheries) scientists and researchers from The University of New South Wales. As well as examining the reproductive biology of tailor in NSW, the study will also look at growth, diet, feeding rates, consumption and stock structure of this important, but poorly-understood recreational fish species.

Whether a “chopper” or a “greenback”, tailor are a great all-round recreational fish species. They are found throughout NSW, are easily accessible off the beaches as well as in estuaries, happily take a wide variety of lures, flies and baits, fight hard and taste great! If you chase tailor regularly, you could be key to helping researchers to learn more about NSW’s tailor population.

Notable donations from Winter 2015



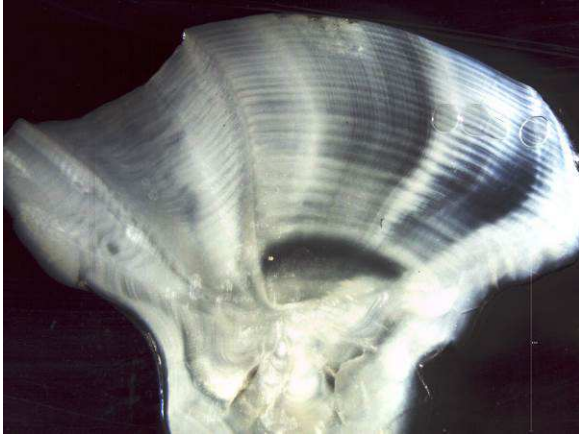
It doesn't have to be warm to enjoy the beach! A justifiably stoked Wayne Cooke with 141 cm of just-landed South Coast beach jew. Photo courtesy Wayne Cooke.



Nice rings! Sixteen rings means sixteen years for Wayne's 141 cm Wollongong slab of silver.

Well, what an incredible season winter 2015 turned out to be for the donation of BIG OLD mulloway to the NSW RAP! Things kicked off in style when Wayne Cooke caught an immense 141 cm fish off the beach at Wollongong in June. This fish was the largest South Coast jewie donated to the RAP in a long while and as you can see, this fish had one of the best looking otolith sections we have ever come across leaving no doubt about its impressive 16 years of age. Wayne's fish was just the third (and easily the largest) 16 year-old mulloway so far recorded in NSW waters!

Not to be outdone, seasoned NSW RAP frame donor Hari Corliss pegged one back for the North Coast jewy hunters with a monster mulloway of his own. Hari has been a great supporter of the NSW RAP donating frames from some pretty impressive jewies in the past two years, but this fish, caught out of the Camden Haven River at Laurieton, was easily the largest of Hari's six previous donations at 151 cm and 29.9 kg! The fish was also easily the oldest of Hari's donations coming in at the ripe age of 24 years making it just the third 24 year old mulloway so far recorded in NSW and the (equal) fourth oldest overall!



Above: The otolith section from Hari Corliss's lunking great 151 cm Laurieton mulloway showing the 24 growth ring used to estimate its impressive age.

Right: Hari Corliss in need of some refreshment after his epic capture of a 151 cm 24 year old mulloway – only the third 24 year old jewy so far recorded from NSW waters. Photo courtesy Hari Corliss.





Above: Twenty-six years of age and the (equal) second oldest mulloway recorded in NSW waters. Certainly old, but not quite wise enough to avoid being outwitted by a 25 year old Nathan Debono!

Left: The smile says it all! Despite being in some pain, Nathan Debono manages to keep a straight face whilst holding up his enormous Newcastle Harbour fish. At 168 cm and 35 kg, mulloway on the East Coast of Australia don't get too much bigger than this! Photo courtesy Nathan Debono.

But wait, there's more! As the old saying goes "when it rains, it pours" and this came in the form of the largest mulloway (in terms of length) so far recorded in NSW waters – an incredible 168 cm 35 kg dinosaur of a fish caught by Nathan Debono in Newcastle Harbour. Nathan very generously agreed to our requests to part with a single jewel from his prize and weren't we fortunate that he did as Nathans' fish was estimated to be 26 years old, which, at the time of its capture was a year older than Nathan himself! This fish has well and truly entered the NSW mulloway record books at 168 cm and 26 years old making it not only the largest, but also the (equal) second oldest mulloway so far recorded in NSW! A great fish and more great information contributing to our knowledge of the NSW mulloway stock.

The NSW RAP enjoys quite a few perks being based at the [Sydney Institute of Marine Science](#) (SIMS). Apart from the mildly pleasant location and average views, excellent laboratory facilities for storage, processing and analysis of donated frames, the NSW RAP also has the opportunity to showcase some of the work we do to the public at the annual SIMS "[Harbour Hike](#)" and open day. This year was no exception with hundreds of people checking out the NSW RAP stall after completing the 8 km hike around the Sydney Harbour foreshore. The demonstration of dissection and removal of otoliths from some enormous mulloway frames on show were a great (if slightly smelly) hit with young and old!



NSW RAP scientists Ashley Fowler (left) and Julian Hughes (right) demonstrate otolith extraction from the frame of a donated mulloway at the Sydney Institute of Marine Science's annual "Harbour Hike" and open day.

Project Progress – Winter 2015

We're getting very consistent with our seasonal frame donations at the RAP and had another 98 mullet frames donated this past winter by 39 committed research anglers and spearfishers. If we can continue to average around 100 fish per quarter, the information we can collect in a year gives researchers a huge amount of scope for analysis of the health of the mullet stock in NSW.

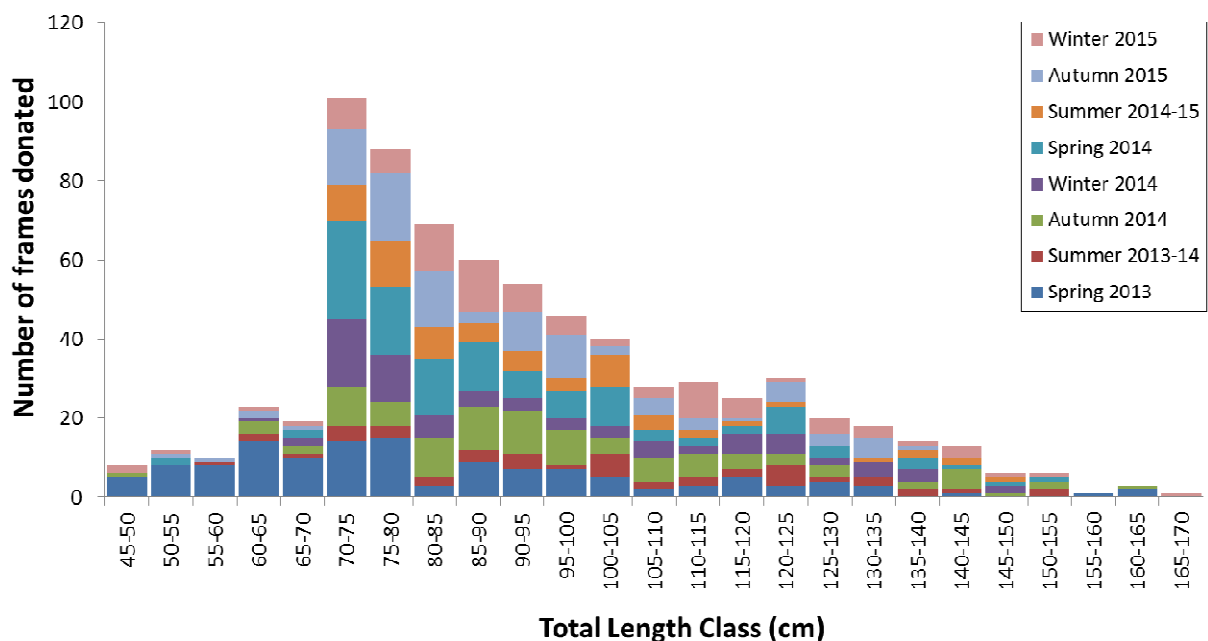
The consistency in the sizes of frames donated to the RAP, particularly from the larger size classes of fish, has also been one of the features of the RAP and winter 2015 was no different. As you would expect, more than half of our donated fish from winter were in the 70-100 cm range, but an additional 20% were between 100 and 120 cm. Fifteen of these fish were bigger than 120 cm, 10 bigger than 130 cm and 6 bigger than 140 cm, all the way up to a truly ridiculous 168 cm fish!

Truly memorable fish for the donating anglers and spearfishers, as well as for Fisheries NSW researchers who get access to this amazing data.

One of the new species on the bench! The donated frame from a fine tailor is processed in the lab. Tailor are one of four new species you will see more of in upcoming RAP newsletters.

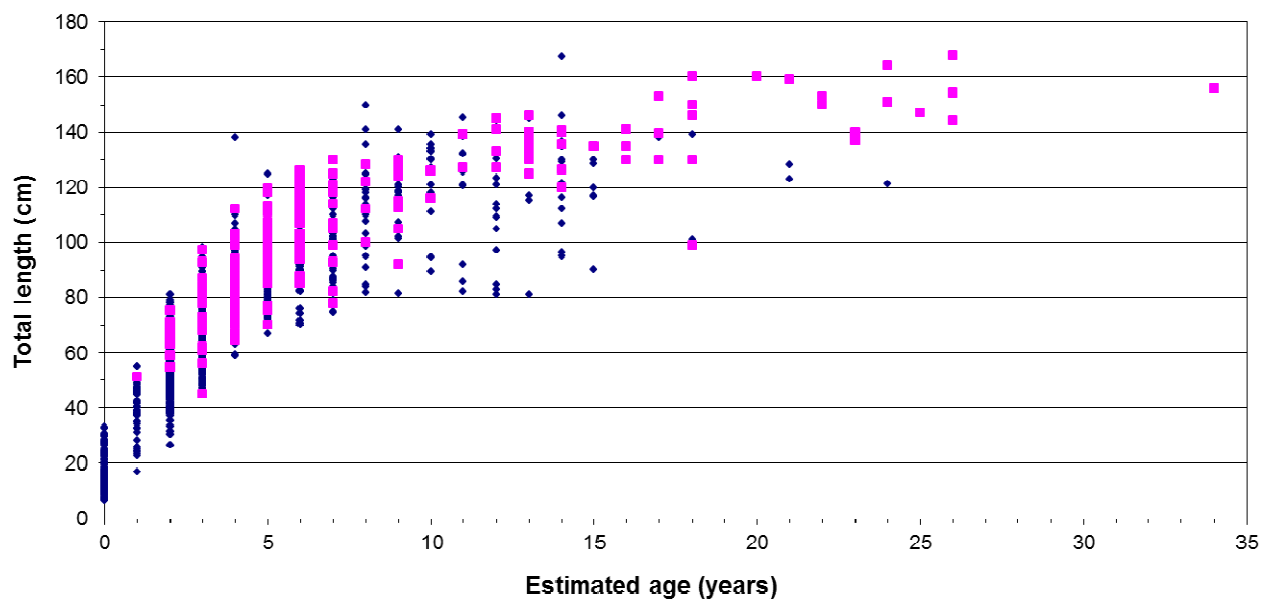


Length frequency of mullet donated to the NSW Research Angler Program since the commencement of the program in September 2013.



Looking at the below graph of the sizes and corresponding ages of all mullet we have data for in NSW, RAP-collected data has visibly improved our understanding of how fast (and variable) the growth of mullet can be. The spread of lengths of individual fish at each age gets progressively larger with increasing age. So a one year old mullet could be anywhere from 20 to 55 cm in length, a spread of only 25 cm. By the time a mullet gets to 9 years old however, it could be anywhere from 80 all the way up to 150 cm in length, a spread of 70 cm for a single age class! As well as establishing important patterns in growth like this, information from frames donated to the RAP have also successfully filled in the all-important far end of the graph with data from the largest and oldest mullet in NSW.

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.



The below table outlining some of the key features of biological data collected for mullet in NSW nicely summarise this dramatic improvement in our knowledge. Since the commencement of the NSW RAP in September 2013, the number of fish we have collected data from estimated to be older than 15 years has more than tripled and we have four times as many older than 20 years! We have just “cracked the ton” of fish greater than 120 cm in length and the RAP has now also provided a new largest recorded mullet at 168cm, pipping the old mark by just 0.4 cm!

Comparison of some key features of biological data collected for mullet by NSW Fisheries prior to the implementation of the NSW RAP, and data collected by the NSW RAP since September 2013.

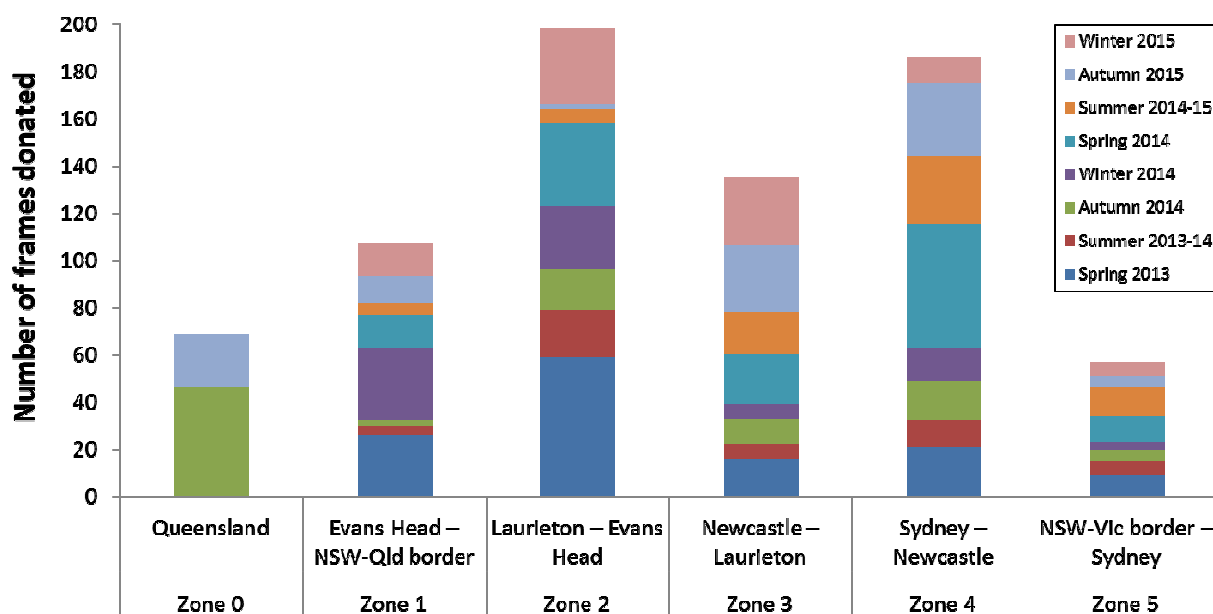
Feature	Prior to NSW RAP	NSW RAP
10 years or older (number of fish)	52	83
15 years or older (number of fish)	10	31
20 years or older (number of fish)	3	14
Oldest fish	24 years (121.5 cm)	34 years (156.0 cm)
120 cm or larger (number of fish)	38	112
130 cm or larger (number of fish)	17	63
140 cm or larger (number of fish)	5	31
Largest fish	167.6 cm (14 years)	168.0 cm (26 years)

After a lean autumn, donations to the RAP from Zone 2 (Laurieton – Evans Head) were back to their jewy-busting best over winter with 35 frames coming through the lab. This region was closely followed by the consistent performers of Zone 3 with 26 frames from the region between Newcastle and Laurieton. We had donations of good numbers of fish from all zones over winter, including the fickle South Coast, making for a memorable season chasing this enigmatic sportfish!

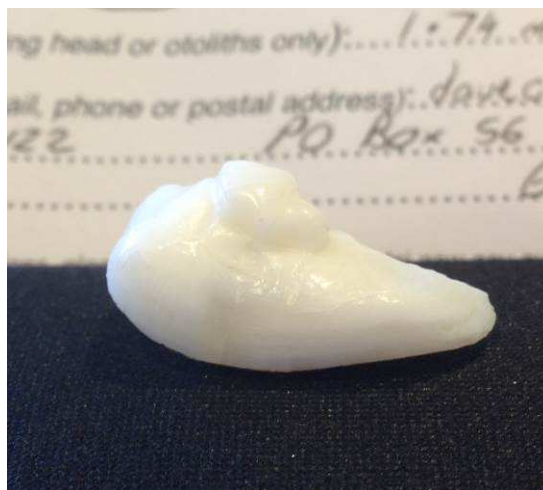
Our largest ever haul of mullet frame donations came in spring last year (133!) and with warming water temperatures the local mullet will again be out looking to pack on a few pounds in preparation for spawning. So, get out there and enjoy the fantastic fishing spring has to offer – and if you do decide to keep a fish (of any size) – please keep the NSW RAP in mind.

Even if it is only one frame, one head, or a single jewel, we want it!

Number of mullet frames donated by recreational fishers to the NSW Research Angler Program since the commencement of the program in September 2013.



And don't forget that you can 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! And 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 jewel as a memento of your mullet conquests!

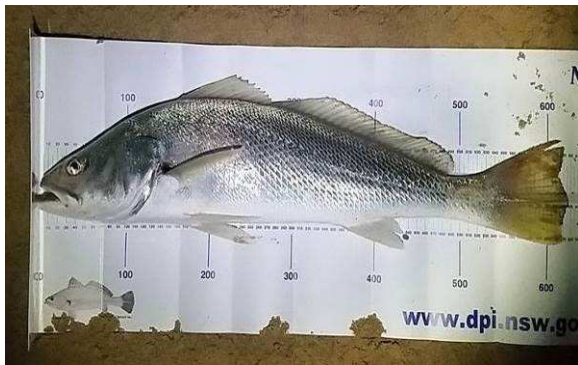


“Keen Angler Diary” Component

As mentioned in the last newsletter, we have recently begun calling in the diaries from some of our earliest recruited “Keen Angler Diarists”. On first look, it would be an understatement to say that they contain some priceless information on the recreational mullockay fishery! If, as we suspect, it is 10% of the fishers (i.e. you guys!) who account for 90% of the mullockay caught, the lengths of the mullockay recorded in these diaries will be an excellent estimator of the size composition of the recreational mullockay fishery – a crucial piece of information for management of mullockay in NSW and assessment of their stock.

We will be contacting the next group of Keen Angler Diarists in the coming months to get hold of what information you guys have collected. Once we receive the diary from a Keen Angler, we digitise it immediately so that it can be returned to the fisher for further data collection. If you have managed to misplace your reply-paid envelope, please contact us (T: 9435 4671, E: research.angler@dpi.nsw.gov.au) and we will get a new one out to you ASAP!

All “Keen Angler Diarists” are provided with a small 20 page waterproof diary to record information from 200 mullockay fishing trips along with a custom-made extra-long 160 cm NSW RAP fish measuring mat for you to accurately measure the lengths of the mullockay you catch (retained as well as released). If you regularly chase mullockay and would like to contribute some crucial data on the recreational mullockay fishery, please contact us (T: 9435 4671, E: research.angler@dpi.nsw.gov.au), and we will send you out a Keen Angler Diary pack. This is an ongoing component of the NSW RAP so it's never too late to get on board!



A lovely sixty-something cm Wollongong beach mullockay is measured by Keen Angler Diarist Paul Mackay prior to release. Photo courtesy Paul Mackay.



A chest full of pure gold! Well, a box anyway. Some well-worn diaries from some seriously dedicated mullockay fishers will provide a unique insight into the recreational mullockay fishery.

The things mulloway eat...!

The most common prey items in the diet of mulloway are widely reported to be fish and squid. Not surprisingly, these are the most commonly used baits when targeting mulloway in NSW, however the opportunistic feeding behaviour of mulloway are occasionally borne out by very interesting things found in mulloway stomachs...they really will eat almost anything! Whilst gut content analysis isn't specifically a part of the NSW RAP, plenty of mulloway frames with the stomachs intact come through our labs to be processed. This season's photos feature some favourite mulloway food (and popular baits!) along with a couple of more unusual prey items.

If you have any images of weird and wonderful things you've discovered in mulloway stomachs, please send them in to the [NSW RAP](#) and we will do our best to identify what your mulloway has been feasting on! Stay tuned for future editions of **"The things mulloway eat...!"** in upcoming NSW RAP Newsletters.



A partially-digested unidentified flathead (*Platycephalus* sp.) from the stomach of a mulloway caught off the Coffs Harbour rocks. Photo courtesy Paul Blade.



Mullet, mullet and more mullet! Mulloway really do love mullet (family Mugilidae) as demonstrated by the stomach contents of a metro Sydney mulloway. Photo courtesy Hussein Balaghe.



Remains of a whiting (*Sillago* sp.) and a squid (order Teuthida) from a Newcastle beach mulloway. Photo courtesy Jeffrey Small.



Almost a mulloway stomach content! This lucky Coffs Harbour tailor (*Pomatomus saltatrix*) shows the unmistakable evidence of a close encounter with a hungry mulloway. Amazingly, despite the injury the fish was still healthy enough to chase down Paul Blade's small metal slice!



Even when small, mulloway still have a big appetite! This 14 cm fish contained a 6 cm sandy sprat (*Hyperlophus vittatus*), a 4 cm juvenile whiting (*Sillago* sp.) and a juvenile eastern king prawn (*Melicertus plebejus*).



Whoever said mulloway weren't an active predator had clearly never found a juvenile bigeye trevally (*Caranx sexfasciatus*) in a stomach – now that would have taken some serious catching! Photo courtesy Paul Blade.



Has this Lake Macquarie mulloway been eating someone's discarded cooked tiger prawns (*Penaeus esculentus*)? It sure looks like it!



Unidentified 6 cm juvenile prawn (family Penaeidae) from a small North Coast river mulloway.



Not always the hunter! This Coffs Harbour mulloway was almost something else's dinner judging by the still healing scars and large piece of flesh missing from its back. Photo courtesy Paul Blade



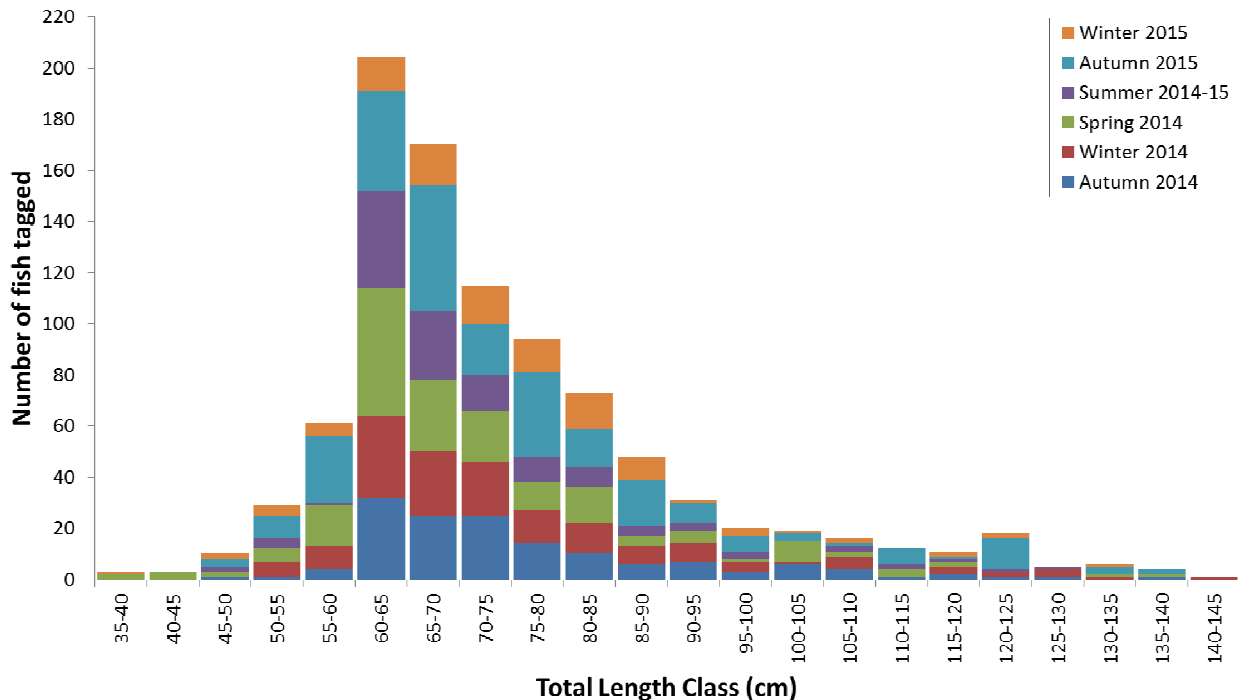
Closeup of the fish at left showing the mulloway's awesome healing properties. Despite its close encounter, this fish was such good health that it pulled like a train off the rocks and was more than strong enough to take a tag!

NSW RAP – ANSA pilot tagging project update

Another top season for the NSW RAP-ANSA pilot mulloway tagging project with participants getting tags into another 104 lucky mulloway over winter. This brings the grand total number of tagged mulloway swimming around in NSW coastal waters and estuaries to a quite astounding 957 fish! Included in these are almost 500 legal-sized fish as well as almost 100 fish of over 100cm!

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 since its commencement March 2014.



And what an unbelievable winter it was for Sydney's Metro mulloway chasers who managed to tag 84 fish from some favourite jewy waters, the Hawkesbury, Georges and Cooks Rivers, Botany and Broken Bay, Brisbane Water and Sydney Harbour. Just goes to show that if you know when and where, mulloway can be caught just about anywhere, regardless of how busy or popular the spot. To illustrate this, our number one tagger for winter 2015 (and our number one tagger overall) Chris Cleaver, contributed an astonishing 25 tagged fish from a wide array of waterways ranging from the Woronora River and Port Hacking, to Lake Illawarra and the Shoalhaven River. Again Dan Selby and Sydney Sportfishing Adventures clientele were in on the action tagging 11 fish to 118 cm out of the Hawkesbury River and for the second season running Andrew Talbot put 8 of his tags to good use in some fine mulloway all out of the underrated Port Hacking system. Only 14 fish were tagged north of Sydney through winter 2015, but 8 of these were tagged by familiar name Scott Purnell off the beach around Newcastle. Local experts Cameron Cronin and Ivan Maric also made the most of a jewfishy winter tagging 7 and 6 fish each from the Parramatta River and Botany Bay, respectively.

Winter 2015 also saw our first mulloway tagged in the famous little system of Brisbane Water on the northern side of Broken Bay. And what a start it was with no fewer than 10 fish tagged over winter, including an awesome 5 fish between 106 and 133 cm tagged and released by local young guns Luke Reilly and Jack Freestone.



Kyle Worley putting one of his tags to good use in a Lake Macquarie winter mulloway of just under one metre. Photo courtesy Kyle Worley



The finished product! A great estuary mulloway successfully measured, tagged and ready for release back into the lake! Photo courtesy Kyle Worley



Loaded and ready to go – a quiver of NSW DPI gamefish tags ready to be put into action tracking the movements and growth of mulloway somewhere in NSW. Photo courtesy Kyle Worley.



A pumped Dan Selby from Sydney Sportfishing Adventures with a 118cm Hawkesbury fish which pushed the 5 lb braid and 10 lb leader to the max, just prior to tag and release. Photo courtesy Sydney Sportfishing Adventures.



Luke Reilly with 121 cm of lure-crunching Brisbane Water mulloway – one of a remarkable tally of 6 fish over 100 cm Luke and mates managed to tag over winter 2015. Photo courtesy Luke Reilly.



Paul Lennon helps a chunky just-tagged Port Stephens mullet to regain its strength beside the boat before being released. Photo courtesy Paul Lennon.



A nice winter 2015 Sydney land-based mullet is tagged and gently slipped back into the water to fight another day. Photo courtesy Chris Cleaver.

Not surprisingly, all these tagged mullet swimming around out there convert to an occasional recapture of a fish carrying a tag! This winter we had nine tagged mullet recaptured and again there was some fascinating information collected as a result. We haven't quite cracked the year mark for a tagged mullet to be at liberty before being recaptured, but a fish tagged by NSW Research Angler Joel Edwards recently came close. Tagged by Joel in the Hunter River when 91 cm, the fish had travelled downstream to the ocean before being recaptured 355 days later by another name familiar to the RAP, Scott McIntyre, on Stockton Beach at 105 cm!

Tagged mullet recaptures for winter 2015 (as of 31 August 2015):

Tagging angler	Total length (cm)	Tagging location	Recapture angler	Recapture location	Total length (cm)	Days at liberty
Damien Sherry	63	Lane Cove River	Glen Purcell	Lane Cove River	68	194
Joel Edwards	91	Hunter River	Scott McIntyre	Stockton Beach	105	355
<i>Unknown</i>	68	Parramatta River	Thomas Crittenden	Parramatta River	68	83
Mark Pirie	60	Clarence River Yamba	Commercial catch	Lake Wooloweyah	73	234
Josh Anderson	61.5	Clarence River Breakwall	Commercial catch	Lake Wooloweyah	81	320
Jamie Gauci	103	Botany Bay	Huy Hoang	Wollongong	110	154
Scott Purnell	106	Stockton Beach	Daniel Brown	Stockton Beach	106	16
Dan Selby	61	Hawkesbury River	Commercial catch	Hunter River	72.5	305
Kieran Hill	65	Newcastle Harbour	Jason Hewitt	Hunter River	70	123

Another example of some seriously fast mullet growth came in the form of a 61.5 cm fish tagged by Josh Anderson of [Ando's Lures](#) at the Yamba breakwall which was recaptured upstream at Lake Wooloweyah some 320 days later growing 19.5 cm in the process. Also recaptured in Lake Wooloweyah this winter was a 73 cm fish that had been previously tagged by Mark Pirie 234 days earlier in the Clarence River at Yamba when 60 cm in length. And just to demonstrate that not all mullet grow this fast, especially when estuarine water temperatures are low during winter, was 68 cm fish tagged in the Parramatta River at Gladesville in Sydney, which was not only recaptured in the exact same location by Thomas Crittenden, but had not grown a single centimetre in its 83 days between tag and recapture! In one of our shortest ever periods between tagging and recapture, a fish tagged by Scott Purnell at Stockton Beach didn't get a chance to put on any length before it was recaptured just 16 days later by Daniel Brown (also on Stockton Beach).

A 103 cm mullet tagged in Botany Bay on March 8 by Jamie Gauci may only have grown by 7 cm before being recaptured some 154 days later on August 9, but had undertaken quite the journey in this time travelling 60 km south to be recaptured in Wollongong by Huy Hoang. Not only did our final winter recap grow a respectable 11.5 cm in 305 days between tag and recapture, but also put some serious kilometres under its belt with a decent swim from the Hawkesbury River, where it was tagged by Dan Selby, to the Hunter River 100 km to the north.

A fine pair of fat bronze winter-caught mullet from the Hawkesbury River – one tagged and ready for release, the other waiting its turn! Photo courtesy Sydney Sportfishing Adventures.



Top Five taggers for winter 2015 (as of 31 August 2015):

Tagger	No. fish tagged	Region
Chris Cleaver	25	Everywhere!
Dan Selby	11	Sydney
Andrew Talbot	8	Sydney
Scott Purnell	8	Harrington
Cameron Cronin	7	Sydney
Ivan Maric	6	Sydney

Top Five taggers overall (as of 31 August 2015):

Tagger	No. fish tagged	Region
Chris Cleaver	193	Everywhere!
Dan Selby	121	Sydney
Paul Blade	52	Coffs Harbour
Ivan Maric	47	Sydney
Andrew Talbot	45	Sydney

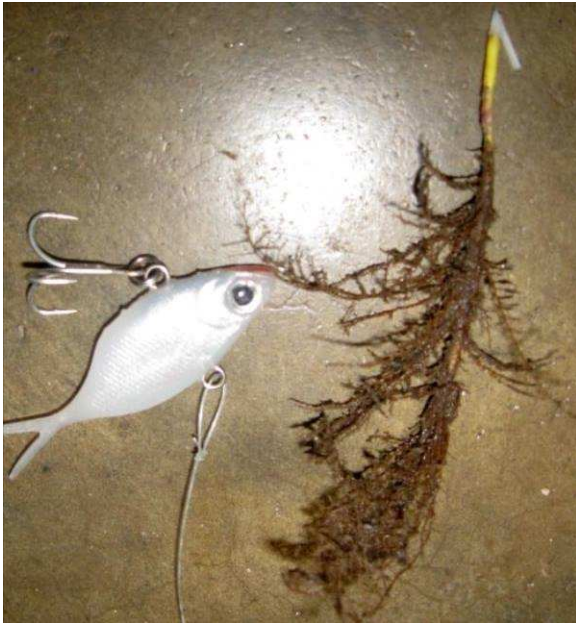
Top Five largest fish tagged for winter 2015 (as of 31 August 2015):

Tagger	Total length (cm)	System
Jack Freestone	133	Brisbane Water
Luke Reilly	121	Brisbane Water
Jack Freestone	120	Brisbane Water
Dan Selby	118	Hawkesbury River
Luke Reilly	115	Brisbane Water

Top Five largest fish tagged overall (as of 31 August 2015):

Tagger	Total length (cm)	System	Season
Dan Selby	144	Hawkesbury River	Winter 2014
Mark Pirie	138	Clarence River	Autumn 2014
Dean Overhall	136	Broken Bay	Autumn 2015
Clay Hilbert	136	Bellinger River	Spring 2014
Joel Edwards	134	Newcastle Harbour	Spring 2014

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 heavily fouled with algae, like this one from a recaptured Queensland jew!



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 Spring 2015 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

NSW Research Angler Program

- Collect biological data from recreationally-caught individuals for use in stock assessments
- Little data from largest (& potentially oldest) animals in population
- RFT funded (licence fees)
- Opportunity for recreational fishers to get involved in research
- 1 million rec fishers in NSW – an untapped resource

Recreational Fishing Trusts | NSW Research Angler Program | Department of Primary Industries

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 four 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!

The “Top Fives”!

Our sincerest thanks to the following dedicated mulloway Research Anglers and spearfishers who have made it into our “Top Five” lists of frame donors overall and those for Winter 2015.

After a lean period recently, Coffs Harbour's mulloway chasers were back into the action over winter with familiar name Paul Blade leading the charge with 11 donated frames including two 120 cm fish in July alone. Paul was ably assisted in his harassment of the Coffs mulloway population by Chris Webb who donated six fine fish to 113 cm and James Sakker, who again flew the flag high for the spearos with 7 fish between 86 and 141 cm! Further afield (although not too far), Shane Mason continued his fine form around Harrington with eight fish between 90 and 130 cm, including 5 over 100 cm! First time frame donor Karl Sismeg from Yamba Bait & Tackle also had a great winter donating five fine mulloway fishing offshore from Yamba. As well as donating the largest (and one of the oldest) mulloway we have data for, the 168 cm leviathan mentioned earlier in the newsletter, it was one of three fish Nathan Debono managed to donate to the program over winter, the other two both going 130 cm!

As well as those mentioned above, thanks to all the fishers who donated their wonderful winter mulloway to the NSW RAP, here's hoping for a similarly cracking spring 2015 of NSW mulloway-hunting!

“Top Five” donors winter 2015 (as of 31 August 2015):

Donor	No. frames donated	Region
Paul Blade	11	Coffs Harbour
Shane Mason	8	Harrington
James Sakker	7	Coffs Harbour
Chris Webb	6	Coffs Harbour
Karl Sismeg	5	Yamba

“Top Five” donors overall (as of 31 August 2015):

Donor	No. frames donated	Region
Paul Blade	55	Coffs Harbour
James Sakker	30	Coffs Harbour
Daniel Hughes	20	Laurieton
Mark Pirie	18	Yamba
John St Vincent Welch	16	Evans Head
Murat Atlihan	16	Sydney

The outrageous number of big fish donated to the RAP last season again demonstrated just how good winter mulloway fishing can be! We had five fish donated between 136 and 145 cm which were estimated to be between 12 and 16 years of age coming from areas as far apart as Wollongong and Coffs Harbour. Despite being only slightly larger, Hari Corliss' 151 cm fish was considerably older at an estimated 24 years old.

“Top Five” largest fish donated and associated ages winter 2015 (as of 31 August 2015):

Donor	Total length (cm)	Estimated age (years)	Region
Nathan Debono	168	26	Newcastle
Hari Corliss	151	24	Port Macquarie
Kieran Hill	145	12	Newcastle
Wayne Cooke	141	16	Wollongong
James Sakker	141	14	Coffs Harbour
Trevor Perry	140	13	Newcastle

“Top Five” largest fish donated and associated ages overall (as of 31 August 2015):

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
Vaughan Little	156	34	Nowra	Spring 2013



Brad Gibson nailed this beautiful 85 cm Wollongong mulloway on a soft plastic one fine evening in June, the fish estimated to be 4 years old. Photo courtesy Brad Gibson.



NSW RAP stalwart Shane Mason with one of eight thumping Mid-North Coast mulloway donated to the RAP this winter. Photo courtesy Shane Mason.

“Top Five” oldest fish donated and associated lengths winter 2015 (as of 31 August 2015):

Donor	Estimated age (years)	Total length (cm)	Region
Nathan Debono	26	168	Newcastle
Hari Corliss	24	151	Port Macquarie
Wayne Cooke	16	141	Wollongong
James Sakker	14	141	Coffs Harbour
James Sakker	14	136	Coffs Harbour
Trevor Perry	13	140	Newcastle

“Top Five” oldest fish donated and associated lengths overall (as of 31 August 2015):

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

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. The list of drop-off locations for donated frames is changing regularly as more tackle retailers become involved in the program. For the mulloway hunters of the Central Coast, you have a new tackle shop drop-off point: **BCF West Gosford (356-374 Manns Rd, West Gosford, T: 4322 4303)** where Jo-Anne and Luke will gladly accept your mulloway frames!

The region around Port Macquarie is one of our most important areas for frame donations so it was with some disappointment that we learnt that our drop-off point in Port, Tackle World Port Macquarie was closing down. We were stuck in quite a bind without a drop-off point in such a fishy part of world, but were thrown a real lifeline by Jason Isaac from **Ned Kelly's Bait & Tackle (42 Gordon St, Port Macquarie, T: 6583 8318)** agreeing to help us out by being our new Port Mac drop-off location. So, if you have a frame from any of our species for the program, want to weigh in your catch or need tips on how to catch them in the first place, go and see Jase – you won't be disappointed.

Right: NSW Research Angler Cameron Doak with a lovely 96 cm Hastings River mulloway ready to be weighed in at one of our newest drop-off locations, Ned Kelly's Bait & Tackle Port Macquarie.



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 winter were decided by randomly drawing one frame donor from each month.

Congratulations to the following Research Anglers:

June	Wayne Cooke	(Wollongong)
July	Damian Cliffe	(Yamba)
August	Trevor Perry	(Newcastle)



Each winner will receive either:

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

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 (mullocky, snapper, dusky flathead, yellowtail kingfish or tailor) 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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