



## **Do we ban fishing during spawning season?**

A ban on snapper fishing during spawning season is often promoted as a way of allowing more fish to spawn, providing more eggs in the water and more fish in the future. While it seems like the right thing to do there is no agreed view from the experts on whether this strategy would increase fish numbers or what months a ban should apply given that spawning can extend from October to March.

Before any change the purpose for implementing a closure needs to be clear. Is it to reduce fishing effort just during spawning or is it aimed at reducing total catch? Is the issue more about commercial methods?

Would the closure apply to both commercial and recreational fishing? Where could you fish in the Hauraki Gulf during spring and avoid snapper? Do we ban all fishing in the Gulf? Would pressure go on more vulnerable species such as trevally and kingfish?

Current science is inconclusive. At the very least, removing trawling from inshore waters to protect the habitat for the early, critical life-stages of snapper is long overdue and fits with LegaSea's Principle #2 - Stop senseless waste.

The following information has been extracted from the Ministry's Plenary report:

“Fishing within aggregations of spawning fish may have the potential to disrupt spawning behaviour and, for some fishing methods or species, may lead to reduced spawning success. No research has been conducted on disruption of snapper spawning, but aggregations of spawning snapper often receive high commercial and recreational fishing effort.

“Areas likely to be important for snapper spawning include the Hauraki Gulf (Cradock Channel, Coromandel Harbour to the Firth of Thames, and between the Noises, Tiritiri Matangi and Kawau Islands, Rangaunu and Doubtless Bay, the Bay of Islands, eastern Bay of Plenty, and the coastal areas adjacent to the harbour mouths on the west coast such as the Manukau and Kaipara Harbours.”

In our view, any closure would need to apply to both commercial and recreational fishing, and in the absence of any solid data it is most unlikely the politicians will stretch their thin popularity stakes for the sake of a few snapper.

## **Our other 'all blacks' – the Black petrel**

Seabirds are good indicators of what's below the surface. Deepsea anglers know that Black petrels are a good indicator that a marlin is close by.

Black petrel fish day and night. They most often fish to around six metres below the surface but can dive much deeper.

Black petrels and other seabirds can get tangled in fishing lines, nets or snagged on hooks. Some changes in the way we fish can make a big difference to seabird survival.

Please visit [www.legasea.co.nz/seabirds](http://www.legasea.co.nz/seabirds).

### **Hot Tip**

Whether you're sailing or motoring, if you see birds resting on the water go to leeward. Birds always fly off the water into the wind. Doing this simple manoeuvre will prevent many broken bones and dead birds.

### **Free Fish Heads**

Thanks to Matt Watson's 'get stuck in and do it' approach the [www.freefishheads.co.nz](http://www.freefishheads.co.nz) website was born. This initiative enables successful anglers to share unwanted fish heads and frames with people in their community and at the same time conserve our fishery.

There are thousands of people signed up online at [www.freefishheads.co.nz](http://www.freefishheads.co.nz) eagerly awaiting a call from a returning fisherman keen to share their catch. If that's you, you can easily find people in your fishing area who would gladly accept the unwanted heads and frames.

This programme represents maximum respect for the fish we take, by reducing waste and bringing communities together. LegaSea encourages all fishers to make use of [www.freefishheads.co.nz](http://www.freefishheads.co.nz) to help conserve fish for future generations.

**ENDS**



LegaSea is a public outreach initiative of the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council. The Council has an experienced fisheries management, science, policy and legal team. On behalf of the Council LegaSea raises funds and provides public-friendly information about a variety of processes that are important to restoring abundance in our fisheries for future generations.

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