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Photo of Three Dumped Marlin Sparks Outrage.

Recently you may have seen or heard about a photo of three dead marlin that were dumped by a commercial fishing boat off the Manukau Harbour. There was outrage and rigorous discussion on Facebook about it, because it was such a sad sight.

For most of us catching a marlin is a challenging feat, where skill, luck and determination all have a part to play. Even though it may be a fish of a life-time, many anglers tag and release. Where the respect for such a beautiful and powerful ocean predator goes unspoken.

So to see them dumped and discarded like rubbish was horrible.

In case you're new to fisheries management terminology, this is called "bycatch". When commercial fishing nets are cast, or thousands of metres of long line's are set – all sorts of marine life can get caught.

Sometimes there are lots and sometimes there are little to none. The type of fishing method used can make a big difference.

Recreational fishers reported watching a purse seine commercial fishing vessel raise it's nets with the marlin in it. This method of fishing can be an indiscriminate method that scoops an entire area and all the marine life that is in it.

When the boat left four marlin remained behind dead. The fishers radioed other boats in the area to make sure all the fish were taken and used.

So why were they dumped?

Well, as you'll read in the NZSFC update, marlin can't be caught and sold by commercial fishing boats in New Zealand. It's a "non-commercial" species. This is an important rule.

Twenty five years ago anglers won the argument that commercial marlin "bycatch" was destroying the NZ fishery. In one year over 6000 striped marlin were 'accidentally' caught by Japanese licensed boats

in New Zealand waters. There is no doubt some boats were targeting them.

A regulation was passed requiring commercial fishers to return all marlin immediately to the sea.. However, they must be recorded by the vessel and reported to ministry officials.

The problem is they're not all recorded. Among other things our advocates are calling for more observers on skipjack purse seine vessels to ascertain the extent of this kind of bycatch, not only for marlin but other species including dolphins and sharks.

Right now the commercial sector are lobbying the government for the ability to land and sell marlin caught as a result of by-catch.

Yellowfin tuna is all but gone, so our message is simple and clear. Our marlin are not for sale.

Our experts in fisheries management at the NZSFC will continue to fight to protect marlin and through LegaSea you can offer your support.

Visit our website, join our mailing list and contribute \$20 to resource the research, advocacy and education work we're doing to fight for our fishing future.

Visit our website www.legasea.co.nz, or for more information please email us at info@legasea.co.nz, like our Facebook page or give us a call on 0800 LEGASEA (534 273).

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