



Surprises in new recreational harvest survey

1.

Over 4.5 million snapper, 1.1 million kahawai and 680,000 blue cod were caught and kept by recreational fishers during 2011-12. These are the three most popular marine species, by number, in New Zealand. Around 5.4 percent of all finfish was taken from charter vessels.

These estimates and harvest figures for other popular species have been detailed in a report recently published by the Ministry for Primary Industries.

It is the most comprehensive study undertaken in New Zealand and includes the methods used and the number of fishing trips. It includes harvest data for finfish, shellfish and other marine species.

This report is useful as it also provides ample data to counteract the claims that recreational catch is unknown and unmanageable. Our catch is being managed, by bag limits, your conservation efforts, or depletion.

Finfish catch

Given our earlier SOS – Save Our Snapper campaign LegaSea was particularly interested in the harvest estimates for snapper in area 1 (SNA1), on the northeast coast.

In SNA1 the average weight of fish kept was 1.06kg, giving a total harvest of around 3,980 tonnes for 2011-12. This estimate is interesting when compared to the independent NIWA survey estimate of 3,754 tonnes.

The NIWA survey was undertaken in the same year and area, using both spotter planes to count the number of boats and boat ramp interviews to collect harvest information.

These survey results have already been used in the SNA1 management review that gave rise to our SOS campaign in August 2013.

It seems that 2010-11 and 2011-12 were very good years for snapper catch in the Hauraki Gulf. Total harvest has declined since then, probably due to a lack of available fish in close to shore.

Kahawai was the second most popular species harvested nationally. A third of all this kahawai catch was taken by land based fishers. On average these fish weighed 1.53kg, giving a national harvest of around 1,785 tonnes.

As you would expect, blue cod catch was highest in the South Island, with around 75 percent of the catch taken south of Cook Strait. Most of these blue cod were taken from boats using rod and line methods. The average weight nationally was 0.5kg, giving a total harvest estimate of around 333 tonnes.

Following the top three species, the next most popular harvest (by number) were red gurnard (430,500), tarakihi (361,000), trevally (174,000), sea perch (160,000), flounder and other flat fish (144,000).

Kingfish were 12th on the numbers list (64,700) but had an average weight over 10kg for fish kept by the angler. This put kingfish at number three in the national harvest, by weight, at 662 tonnes.

Most kingfish were caught by rod and line methods from boats, but land based and spearfishing methods also feature in the survey.

Results from this research are valuable as no other recreational harvest survey can provide national coverage of all fishing methods.

And while this new survey method is expensive, it is based on a sound statistical design and a large sample size. It is likely to be repeated every five years to meet the demand for recreational harvest information.

The finer detail

The National Research Bureau used a door-to-door survey of 30,390 homes to recruit over 7000 fishers.

Data was collected using a carefully worded phone interview of all fishers at regular intervals from October 2011 to September 2012. It was important that fishers only reported what they personally caught, or their share of the catch if fishing as a group using a longline or set net.

Reported catch was scaled up to estimate total catch by New Zealand residents aged 15 years and older. The National Panel Survey, as it is called, has been reviewed and approved by international experts and will be repeated in 2016-17.

A New Zealand Sport Fishing Council science representative has attended all 18 of the MPI working group meetings and one Ministerial meeting over the last five years of planning, implementation and review. The full 145-page MPI report is online alongside an easy to read 1-page summary. www.legasea.co.nz/research.php

2.

Fishing amongst seabirds

More species of seabirds breed in New Zealand than anywhere else in the world. Seabirds are good indicators of what is below the water's surface, this makes them an angler's best friend. But when seabirds get close to the boat they can easily tangle in our fishing lines or get caught on baited hooks. This can be fatal for the bird and frustrating for the angler.

There are some simple steps we can take to avoid hooking or damaging seabirds. We need to learn these measures quickly as some of these seabirds are rarer than Kiwis and dying unnecessarily.

Small changes in the way we fish can make a big difference to seabird survival. We might even catch more fish if we learn how to be smart around these natural fish finders.

Fish tidy

- Seabirds are hunting for food. Keep unused bait and scraps in covered bins until you have finished fishing.
- Gut and fillet your catch once your hooks are out of the water.
- Never feed seabirds while you are fishing. It only encourages them to hang about, get in your way when fishing and steal your baits.

Fish fast

- Sink your bait fast and well below the surface, particularly when there are lots of seabirds in the area.
- Take particular care around boil-ups or "meatballs".
- Seabirds move fast – if birds are nearby keep a keen watch when setting and retrieving your fishing gear.
- A moving bait is very attractive to a hungry seabird. More time spent with a seabird means less fishing time.

Burley well below the birds

- Sink burley containers deep, further from the birds and closer to the fish.

Deter birds from your gear

- Create a 'safe zone' so you can get your gear up and down.
- Some fishers tie streamers to a spare rod or outrigger with a half-filled plastic milk bottle tied securely to the end. This bounces over the water and distracts the bird from your fishing gear.
- Others throw a bucket of water towards the birds to shoo them away from hooks and baits.
- A deck hose sprayed off the back of the transom is a good deterrent too.

Try these seabird smart guidelines

- Clean the decks and bin any scraps. Seabirds have an extraordinary sense of smell.
- Use a rig with heavy sinkers rather than casting light gear or surface fishing.
- Change the size or type of bait. Softbaits are less attractive, although we are not sure about the very smelly varieties.
- Fish at night or early morning, when there are fewer birds around.
- Move further away from seabird colonies and feeding paths, particularly if you are set netting.
- Take a break or move to another spot.

Treat birds with care

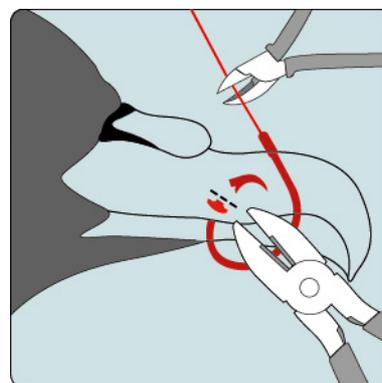
If you do catch a seabird please treat it with care. Just like an undersized fish, the way you treat a hooked seabird can make all the difference to its chances of survival.

The gear you use to release a seabird is very similar to the gear you would use to release a fish. It is useful to have this basic release kit organised, it includes items you would most likely have on board anyway:

- Line clippers or scissors
- Towel
- Pliers
- Landing net.

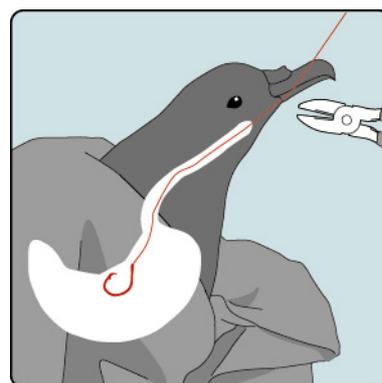
How to de-hook a bird

- Wrap the bird in a towel and cover its eyes if possible.
- Hold feet firmly.
- Hold large bird's beak shut, but don't cover the nostrils or twist the beak.
- Cut the fishing line from the hook.
- Use pliers to flatten the barb or cut the hook with small bolt cutters.
- Pull the hook out.



What to do with a swallowed hook

- Wrap the bird in a towel and cover its eyes if possible.
- Hold feet firmly.
- Hold large bird's beak shut, but don't cover the nostrils or twist the beak.
- If hook is swallowed, cut the line as close to the entry point as possible.
- Fishing line left dangling from the bird can tangle on plants, rocks or other birds.



The Hauraki Gulf has been described as the seabird capital of the world. If fishing in the Gulf or near seabirds this summer please take care to firstly avoid catching these rare birds, and if you do hook them, learn how to release them with as little damage as possible to you and the bird.

Seabirds and fishing go together – as Kiwi anglers we are the ones who can make a difference out on the water. Let's fish seabird smart this summer.

You can download a copy of the full Safe Seabird Release Guidelines from the web www.southernseabirds.org.

LegaSea appreciates the support of the Southern Seabird Solutions Trust in providing this information. www.legasea.co.nz/seabirds.php

What can you do?

Help us protect the future of fishing in New Zealand by getting on board with LegaSea-

1. Visit www.legasea.co.nz
2. Sign up for our updates at www.legasea.co.nz/subscribe
3. Check Facebook www.facebook.com/legasea
4. Email: info@legasea.co.nz
5. Phone 0800 LEGASEA (534 273)
6. Make a modest, regular contribution to LegaSea. www.legasea.co.nz/contribute

ENDS

BREAK OUT BOX



LegaSea is the public face 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 provides public-friendly information about a variety of processes that are important to the sustainable management of fisheries for future generations.