

Recreational Fishing In The Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary



MINISTER'S
RECREATIONAL FISHING
ADVISORY COUNCIL

The following are extracts taken from the Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary Management Plan 2008

ISSUE 1.3

Entanglement – in vessel and fishing gear

Dolphins may become entangled in discarded fishing nets and other fishing gear (such as hooks and line from either commercial or recreational vessels), rope from any type of vessel, or from land-based fishing activities.

Discarded fishing line is common in the ADS. There are a number of reports of non-fatal entanglements.

Comparison of the number of incidents against the number of animal movements and amount of discarded rope and gear, shows entanglement is not frequent.

PRIORITY – Medium

STRATEGY Reduce the amount of fishing gear/discarded rope in the ADS.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY

- Animal welfare and safety – DEH
- • Commercial and recreational fishing regulation – Primary Industries and Resources SA (PIRSA) Fisheries
- • Vessel management – DTEI
- • Management of litter and debris – local councils, Environment Protection Authority (EPA) ACTIONS
- • ADS staff will maintain regular litter observations, including a litter monitoring program on Torrens Island.
- • Undertake regular litter clean-ups.
- • ADS staff will work with existing community education programs and undertake specific ADS education programs to increase awareness of the impacts of litter on dolphins and their habitat.

ISSUE 1.5

Impacts from human interaction

- ADS dolphins experience regular interactions with humans resulting in impacts from vessels (noise, movements, litter, people seeking interactions with the animals), other human caused noises, development activities, dredging and fishing.
- Such interactions are known to cause behavioral changes in dolphins. The extent and consequence of these are unknown.
- PRIORITY – Medium
- STRATEGY Monitor behavior of ADS dolphins to assess any changes that may occur.
- GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY
 - Animal welfare and safety – DEH
 - Vessel management – DTEI
 - Commercial and recreational fishing regulation – PIRSA Fisheries
 - Assessment of new developments – relevant planning authorities and prescribed referral authorities, including DEH (for Coast Protection Board) and EPA ACTIONS
- ADS staff will maintain regular observation of resident animals to observe any major behavioural changes.
- DEH will maintain an overview of Australian and international studies of impacts of human interactions on dolphins to review findings that may be applicable to the ADS.

ISSUE 2.5

Recreational fishing

- Recreational fishing is arguably the most popular recreational activity in the ADS.
- Impacts on habitat include direct removal of target and incidental species, bait digging and impacts on vegetation and water quality from physical disturbance from vessel wake, vessel discharges, anchors and fishers travelling through vegetation to access fishing areas.
- PRIORITY – Medium/High
- STRATEGY Initiate education programs with fishers to improve existing practices.
- GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY
 - Commercial and recreational fishing regulation – PIRSA Fisheries
 - Vessel management – DTEI • Protection of native vegetation – DWLBC (for Native Vegetation Council)
 - Conservation of marine biodiversity and management of Crown Lands and Conservation Parks – DEH ACTIONS
 - ADS staff will undertake on-ground education activities with fishers and encourage minimal impact fishing practices, such as the use of drogues and environmentally friendly equipment and packaging.
 - ADS staff will continue to patrol conservation parks to ensure no illegal fishing activity occurs in parks and continue to support PIRSA Fisheries compliance efforts in the ADS, including activities in aquatic reserves.
 - Ascertain current fishing effort and take in the ADS to determine impacts on prey species and vegetation habitat.
 - Ascertain existing bait digging activities to determine locations and quantify the extent of activity to increase understanding of bait digging impacts

ISSUE 4.2

Support of recreational users

The ADS hosts a range of recreational uses including fishing, sailing events, speedboat events, jet ski activities, bird watching, canoeing and kayaking.

These activities may sometimes conflict with each other and with the achievement of other ADS objectives.

PRIORITY – Medium/High

STRATEGY Work with all users to improve practices, coordinate activities and improve understanding among user groups to support broad achievement of all ADS objectives.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY

- Administration of the ADS Act – DEH •
- Vessel management – DTEI
- • Fisheries management – PIRSA Fisheries
- • Tourism support – South Australian Tourism Commission ACTIONS
- • DEH will continue ongoing assessment of referrals for aquatic licences (under section 26 of the Harbours and Navigation Act) and work with licensed and unlicensed recreational users to ensure best practices are undertaken.
- • Collaborate with community groups to develop ADS education materials.
- • Work with South Australian Recreational Fishing Advisory Council (SARFAC) to develop a code of practice specific to the ADS to support ecologically sustainable recreational fishing practices.
- • Investigate the creation of codes of practice for other regular recreational users, as required.

The ADS management plan encompasses:

Lack of scientific knowledge about ADS Dolphins

Vessel strike

Intentional harm

Food Supply

Loss of vegetation

New developments

Marine Pests

Discharges - nutrients

Discharges - Ballast waters

Discharges - Pollutants

Inclusion of all stakeholders

Support of industry interests

Protection of indigenous values in the area

Support of tourism activities

Supply of information

ADS Signage strategy

Promote the implementation of EDS principles

The following species are found in ADS waters makes it one of the most easily accessible waterways in Adelaide:

Whiting

Snapper

Bream

Garfish

Flathead

Mulloway

Mullet

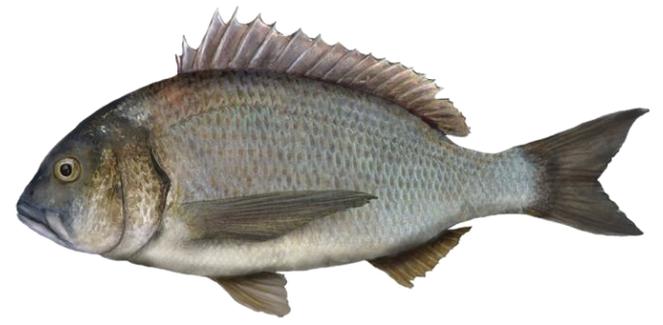
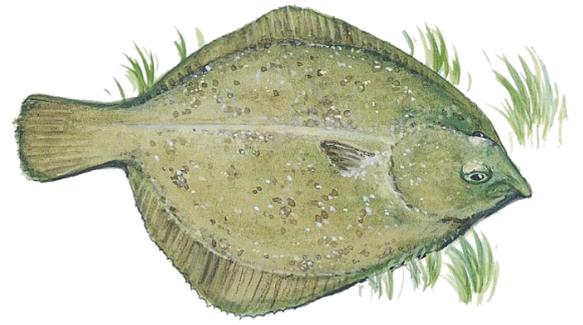
Salmon

Squid

Tommy rough

Flounder

Kingfish



The following are extracts from NOAA Fisheries Service:

NOAA Fisheries, also known as the National Marine Fisheries Service, is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration within the Department of Commerce. We have five regional offices, six science centers, and more than 20 laboratories around the United States and U.S. territories, and we work with partners across the nation

Do dolphins get caught on fishing hooks?

Dolphins can see the hooks with their echolocation, some of them are very good at taking fish from hooks or nets without getting caught by them but sometimes damaging them. But echolocation is an active sense so they have to actually look at them to see them

Do dolphins steal all types of bait and catch?

Dolphins are known to steal various types of bait, both dead and alive, as well as catch from recreational fishing gear, including catch attached to artificial lures. Literature has also documented depredation (Zollett and Read 2006).

Dolphin Depredating (stealing) bait/catch - What is depredation?

Depredation is the removal of, or damage to, captured fish or bait (commercial or recreational), caused by predators. Dolphins are known to depredate, or steal, both the bait and catch of recreational anglers. In some cases, dolphins steal the bait and catch directly off recreational gear, leaving the gear intact and escaping without being hooked or entangled in monofilament. In other cases, the fishing line snaps and the dolphin steals the catch or bait with the gear still attached. This increases the dolphin's risk of injury or death from ingestion of hooks and lures and/or entanglement in monofilament line

How does feeding wild dolphins contribute to their depredatory (stealing) behavior?

Feeding wild dolphins causes them to associate humans with food and become habituated to humans, which has been observed to result in dolphins "begging" for handouts. If fed repeatedly, dolphins learn where to go for free handouts. Bait and catch attached to a fishing line is a readily available food source for dolphins, especially for habituated dolphins. Additionally, tossing leftover bait or unwanted fish into the water when a dolphin is nearby may reinforce dolphins' associating humans with food, thereby encouraging stealing behavior.

Why do dolphins steal bait/catch from recreational fishing gear?

Although it is unclear exactly what triggers this type of behavior, it may be the result of many factors, such as:

Illegal feeding of wild dolphins (NMFS 1994; Hanan et al. 1989)

Changes in fishing effort (Zollett and Read 2006; Donoghue et al. 2003)

Natural, environmental factors, such as localized depleted fish stocks (Wells pers. comm.)

Despite the uncertainty in the exact cause of depredatory behavior, illegally feeding wild dolphins contributes to this problem by negatively altering dolphins' foraging strategy (NMFS 1994; Hanan et al. 1989).

When humans feed wild dolphins, they associate people with free handouts and an easy meal, thus reinforcing stealing behavior. This makes dolphins less wary of humans, alters their natural behaviors, and increases their vulnerability to injury and death.

Additionally, dolphins may come into close contact with anglers, which increases the risk of accidental entanglement in fishing gear. Cases have been reported where these unnatural behaviors are being passed on to calves and other dolphins, resulting in new generations of wild dolphins learning to beg for food and steal from anglers' gear (NMFS 1994).

LITERATURE CITED Cox, T.M., A.J. Read, D. Swanner, K. Urian, D. Waples. 2003. Behavioral responses of bottlenose dolphins, *Tursiops truncatus*, to gillnets and acoustic alarms. *Biological Conservation* 115: 203-212. Donoghue, M.R., R. Reeves, and G. Stone. 2003. Report on the workshop on interactions between cetaceans and longline fisheries held in Apia, Samoa, November 2002. New England Aquarium Aquatic Forum Series Report 03-1, 44 p. 10 Hanan, D.A., L.M. Jones, and R.B. Read. 1989. California Sea Lion Interaction and Depredation Rates with the Commercial Fishing Vessel Fleet Near San Diego. California Cooperative Oceanic Fisheries Investigation Report, Vol. 30: 122-126 NMFS. 1994. Report to Congress on Results of Feeding Wild Dolphins: 1989-1994. National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Protected Resources. 23 pp. Scott, M.D., R.S. Wells and A.B. Irvine. 1990. A long-term study of bottlenose dolphins on the west coast of Florida. Pp. 235-244 In: S. Leatherwood and R.R. Reeves (eds.), *The Bottlenose Dolphin*. Academic Press, San Diego. 653 pp. Wells, R.S. 1991. The role of long-term study in understanding the social structure of a bottlenose dolphin community. Pp. 199-225 In: K. Pryor and K.S. Norris (eds.), *Dolphin Societies: Discoveries and Puzzles*. Univ. of California Press, Berkeley. 397 pp. Wells, R.S. 2003. Dolphin social complexity: Lessons from long-term study and life history. Pp. 32-56 In: F.B.M. de Waal and P.L. Tyack, eds., *Animal Social Complexity: Intelligence, Culture, and Individualized Societies*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA. Wells, R.S. 2006. Depleted pinfish stocks in Sarasota Bay. Personal communication. August 4, 2006. Zollett, E.A. and A.J. Read. 2006. Depredation of catch by bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) in the Florida king mackerel (*Scomberomorus cavalla*) troll fishery. *Fishery Bulletin*, 104: 343-349.

I am sure since the inception of the ADS Management Plan most of the issues have been worked through at some time or another. Unfortunately it was “some time ago” and could benefit from an extensive collaboration from ADS and Recreational Fishers in education best practices while fishing in the area.

Developing a comprehensive outreach and education strategy

The strategy highlights methods for distributing important conservation messages to raise public awareness.

Ongoing and future education efforts that promote responsible fishing practices and to help prevent dangerous interactions include: posting billboards; presenting at educational workshops; issuing press releases; producing and distributing fact sheets, brochures, and other outreach materials; airing public service announcements for radio and television broadcasts; providing information at conventions, shows, and festivals; posting signs, etc.

In addition to the above-mentioned outreach techniques, identified “Best Fishing Practices for Avoiding Interactions with Dolphins” to further prevent these harmful interactions with recreational gear from occurring.

Promote these “Best Fishing Practices” and other conservation messages through various means, such as metal signs at fishing piers, marinas, and boat ramps; local tackle shops.

All outreach materials developed should also include the pertinent numbers to report a marine mammal injury or entanglement

Best Fishing Practices In The Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary

By following a few simple tips designed to protect dolphins in the ADS you can prevent serious and even fatal dolphin injuries and reduce interactions with recreational fishing gear and boats



Never feed wild dolphins

Feeding teaches dolphins to beg for food and draws them close to fishing gear and boat propellers. Feeding dolphins is illegal and can incur fines.



Avoid tossing leftover bait to dolphins if they are nearby

Make use of leftover bait by taking it home to freeze or dispose of properly
Dumping leftover bait may attract dolphins to fishing areas to beg or steal bait or catch.



Check your gear and terminal tackle

Make sure they are in good shape and will not break too easily, resulting in a lost fish with a hook that could be eaten by a dolphin. Even small amounts of gear in the water can be harmful to wildlife if swallowed or entangled



Avoid fishing in an area where dolphins are actively feeding

Dolphins may mistake your bait or catch for food.



Do not release caught fish in the presence of dolphins

This reinforces the association of recreational fishing activities with a food source. Anglers should try to release the fish as far from the dolphin and as quietly as possible.



Change fishing locations if dolphins are showing interest in your bait or catch

Move away from dolphins to avoid unintentionally hooking one and prevent damage to gear or catch



Do not cast your line toward a dolphin



Use corrodible hooks

Corrodible hooks which will eventually dissolve
(any hooks other than stainless steel)



Use circle hooks

Circle hooks may reduce injuries to fish and dolphins



Never try to reel in a dolphin that may be hooked

If a dolphin is hooked and the hook is set, cut the line as close to the dolphin as safely possible. If the hook is not set, put slack on the line and give the dolphin time to release itself.
Report to XXX as soon as possible.



Stay at least 50 yards away from dolphins

Stay a safe distance from to avoid causing potential harm



Stow used fishing line

Littering is illegal and can be harmful to wildlife
Make sure to collect any broken or used fishing lines
to discard in recycling bins

In addition to the Best Fishing Practices for Avoiding Interactions with Dolphins initiatives we could also adopt the following:

Introduce the mandatory reporting of interactions with dolphins for recreational fishers

Introduce/increase penalties for people caught - observed feeding dolphins

Fisheries monitoring program and surveying of Recreational fishers in the area

Introduce dedicated fishing line bins, to wharfs, fishing platforms, foreshores and boat ramps

In closing:

The Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary is not normal waters, it is an area designed to advance and protect Dolphins more so than any other waters, yet it has always been in the context that the Port River is a modified environment and that high levels of Recreational fishing occurs there.

While dolphin mortality is not entirely uncommon in fisheries and while all reasonable efforts to reduce interactions and mitigate harm should be considered, it appears the rate of interaction to fishing events is very low based on the data presented.

To effectively ban Jewfish and Kingfish fishing within the upper Port River (through spatial or gear controls) is effectively shutting out the vast majority of the metro kingfish - mulloway fishery.

There is a long history for those fishing in the Port River of anglers chasing the elusive Kingfish - mulloway with live baits and the inter-generational cultural significance of this activity, including the statue of catching one of these prized fish in the river as a rite of passage for many Adelaide fishers.

News Release



Hon John Hill

Minister for Environment and Conservation

Minister for the River Murray

Minister for Gambling

Minister for the Southern Suburbs

Minister Assisting the Premier in the Arts

Friday the 15th of November, 2002

GUARDIANS OF THE PORT RIVER DOLPHINS

The Minister for Environment and Conservation, John Hill and the South Australian Recreational Fishing Advisory Council announced today that they will work together to ensure long term protection for the Port River's unique dolphin population.

The Minister for Environment and Conservation, John Hill said recreational anglers and the State Government's Dolphin Sanctuary Steering Committee are working together to ensure the highest possible level of protection for the dolphins.

"Initially there was a lot of concern amongst recreational anglers about the proposed Port River Dolphin Sanctuary, but I've continually emphasised to them that I want the anglers to be the guardians of the dolphins. They won't be excluded from the Port River," the Minister said.

"With the cooperation of recreational anglers we can provide a sanctuary which will be constantly watched by people who are there at all hours of the day and night and have the dolphins' best interests at heart. The Port River Dolphin Sanctuary is a unique undertaking which can't be achieved unless the community is behind it, so this positive response from recreational anglers is vital to its success."

The Executive Officer of the SA Recreational Fishing Advisory Council, Trevor Watts, said SARFAC is now supportive in principle of the proposed dolphin sanctuary area after their fears about a ban on recreational fishing in the Port River were laid to rest.

"Some recreational anglers were suspicious that there may be an attempt to lock them out of the Port River system, which is an important fishing area, but John Hill has now rejected any suggestion of a ban," Trevor Watts said.

"It's in the best interests of recreational anglers to have a clean and safe environment in the Port River, because what is good for the dolphins is also good for other species.

"I'm also confident recreational anglers will now be more comfortable with the dolphin sanctuary proposal to reduce the risk of snagged fishing line on rocks and for provision of refuse bins for discarded line and other litter at popular fishing spots on the Port River.

"We should ensure that we clean up our immediate area and leave only footprints where we have been. This would be a good time to launch SA's first code of conduct for recreational angling that supports our mission of developing partnerships and sharing information," Mr Watts said.