



Government of Western Australia
Department of Fisheries



SPECIES IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

WEST COAST REGION



YOUR LICENCE FEES AT WORK

PUBLISHED JANUARY 2013

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Western Australia's marine environment is divided into 'bioregions' (biological regions). The West Coast Bioregion, also known as the West Coast region, extends from just north of Kalbarri to Black Point, east of Augusta, and contains more than 100 species of fish targeted by recreational fishers.

This guide provides a brief overview of some of the region's most sought-after species. Fishing rules are covered in a separate guide.

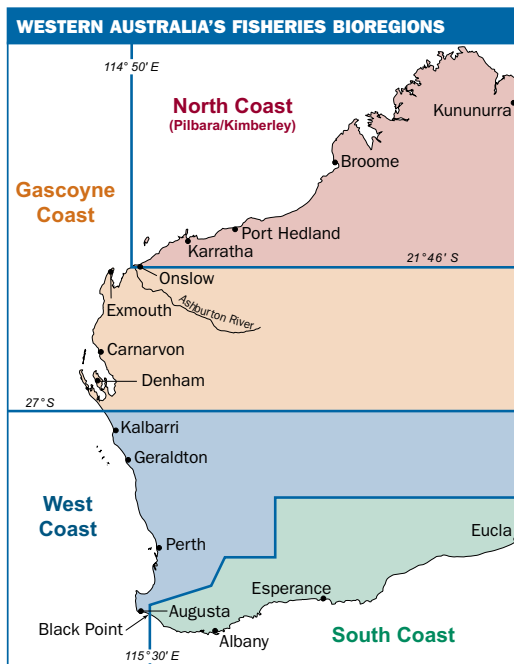
The marine environment

The West Coast region contains a mixture of temperate and sub-tropical species.

Two major current systems, the Leeuwin Current and the Capes Current, affect the West Coast region's marine ecology.

The Leeuwin Current is a warm tropical current that pushes south from Indonesia down past Cape Leeuwin. It is strongest in winter and accounts for the presence of true corals at the Abrolhos Islands, as well as the transport of tropical species down the west coast.

The cooler Capes Current flows from Cape Leeuwin northwards to Shark Bay through the inshore waters in summer. It is thought to influence the survival and distribution of the larvae and juveniles of temperate fish species, especially those of tailor and West Australian dhufish, which spawn in spring and summer.



Estuaries and their importance

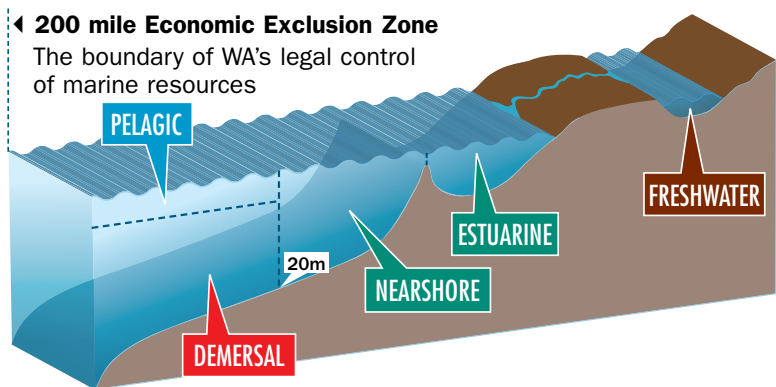
Among the most popular places to fish in the West Coast region are the Swan-Canning and Peel-Harvey estuaries.

Human and natural environmental changes can affect the quality of life in these estuaries and the abundance of fish. For example, wet winters tend to reduce the abundance of crabs, flathead and tailor.

The Swan-Canning is a tidal system. Each spring, a wedge of salt water pushes its way upstream under the fresh water, driven by the incoming tide. This changes the conditions from riverine freshwater to marine. This wedge is a breeding signal for fish, as they use the resulting tidal energy to distribute their eggs and larvae throughout the system.

Categories

In this guide fish are categorised according to their aquatic environment (see diagram below).



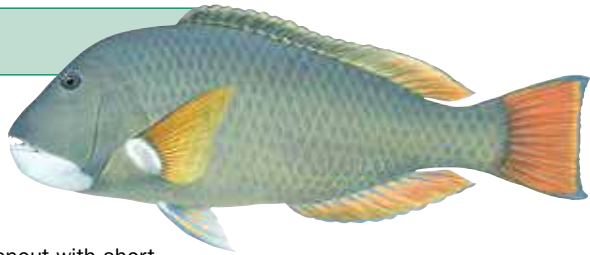
- Demersal fish generally live on or near the ocean floor, often at depths of more than 20 metres.
- Pelagic fish normally inhabit the surface or the middle depths of the ocean.
- Nearshore and estuarine fish typically live in the estuary reaches of rivers and/or in the ocean in depths of water up to 20 metres.

DEMERSAL

Baldchin groper

Choerodon rubescens

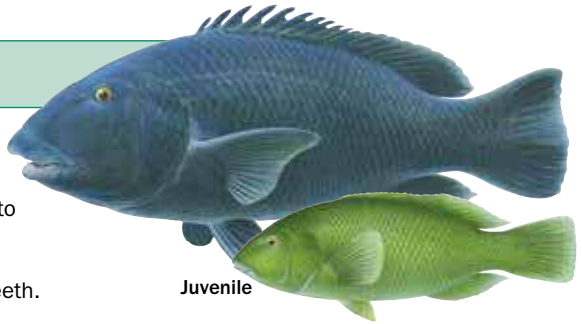
Habitat: Coral reefs and rock area.
Grows to: Around 70cm and 7kg.
Reproduction: Matures as female at about three to four years and 27cm. Changes sex to male at about 10 to 12 years and 48 to 55cm.
Features: Abruptly pale white chin, blunt snout with short head and eyes set well above mouth.



Western blue groper

Achoerodus gouldii

Habitat: Continental shelf, rare north of Perth.
Grows to: About 160cm and 39kg.
Reproduction: Changes sex from female to male at about 80cm.
Life span: Around 70 years.
Features: Large fleshy lips and peg-like teeth.



Blue morwong (queen snapper)

Nemadactylus valenciennesi

Habitat: Continental shelf, over reefs and sponge gardens.
Grows to: Around 100cm and 11kg.
Reproduction: Matures at about 60 to 80cm and seven to nine years.
Life span: Around 20 years.
Features: Silvery-blue sides with yellow tinge, blue and yellow lines around eyes, thick lips.



Breaksea cod

Epinephelides armatus

Habitat: Coastal reefs.
Grows to: Around 60cm and 3kg.
Reproduction: Males mature at about 25cm and three years. Females mature at about 30cm and at least five years. **Life span:** About 18 years. **Features:** Varies in colour, but a distinctive black blotch surrounds the anus – hence its local name 'black arse'.



Eightbar grouper

(grey banded rockcod/eightbar cod)

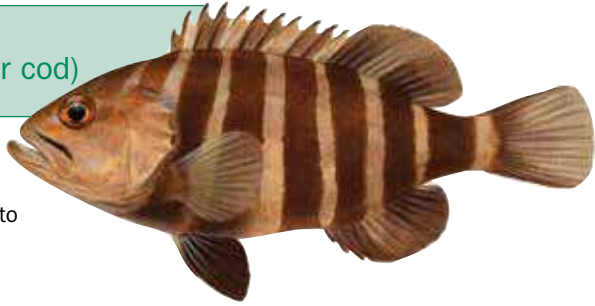
Hyporthodus octofasciatus

Habitat: Deep offshore reefs, 100m plus in depth.

Grows to: About 150cm and 67kg.

Reproduction: Changes sex from female to male. **Life span:** Around 47 years.

Features: Vertical dark bands on body.



West Australian dhufish

Glaucosoma hebraicum

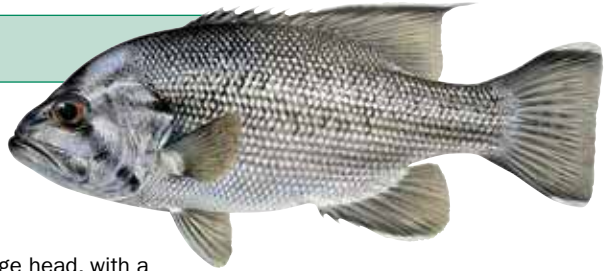
Habitat: Rocky bottoms on the inner shelf to 120m deep.

Grows to: About 125cm and 26kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 30 to 40cm and four to five years.

Life span: Around 40 years.

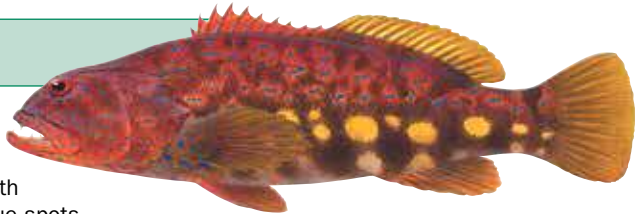
Features: Bright silvery, robust body, large head, with a black line through the eye. Males have a long filament extending from dorsal fin.



Harlequin fish

Othos dentex

Habitat: Shallow rocky reefs to 30m, protected clear coastal waters in caves. **Grows to:** Around 76cm and 5kg. **Features:** Red or pink to grey, with yellow or green blotches and large blue spots.



Snapper (pink snapper)

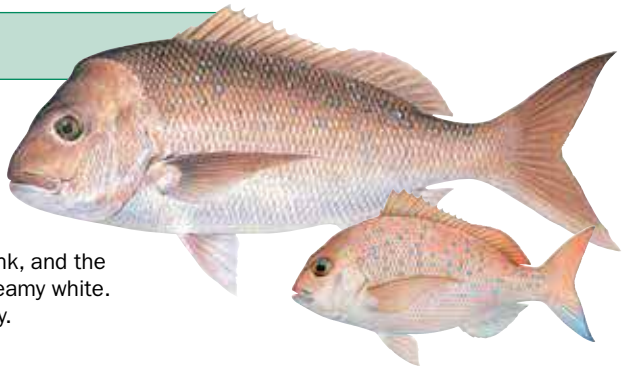
Pagrus auratus

Habitat: Reefs, large bays or on the continental shelf.

Grows to: Over 100cm and 10kg.

Reproduction: Matures in Perth area at about 58cm (females) and five to six years. **Life span:** At least 30 years.

Features: Top, tail and side fins are pink, and the bottom fins range from pale pink to creamy white. Bright blue spots on upper part of body.



Juvenile

Bight redfish (red snapper/nannygai)

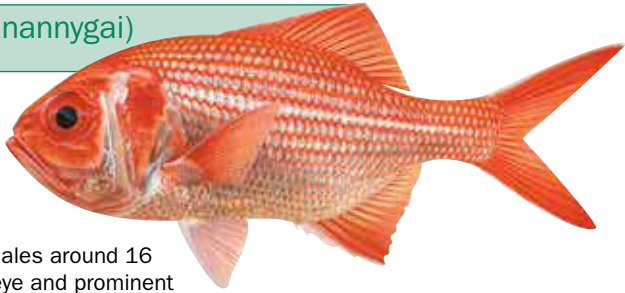
Centroberyx gerrardi

Habitat: Deeper offshore reefs and pinnacles, occasionally in shallow waters.

Grows to: About 66cm and 4.6kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 20 to 25cm and four years.

Life span: Males around 11 years. Females around 16 years. **Features:** Red to reddish-silver eye and prominent white lateral line, six dorsal spines.



Swallowtail

Centroberyx lineatus

Habitat: Deeper offshore reefs and pinnacles, schools occasionally observed over shallow reefs adjacent to deep water.

Grows to: About 45cm and 1kg.

Features: Swallow-like tail and relatively slender body, varies from reddish-silver to red.



Foxfish (western foxfish)

Bodianus frenchii

Habitat: Deeper offshore reefs and caves.

Grows to: About 50cm and 2kg.

Life span: Around 65 years.

Reproduction: Matures at at least 25cm and six years of age.

Features: Reddish colour with two yellow blotches on back.



Bass groper

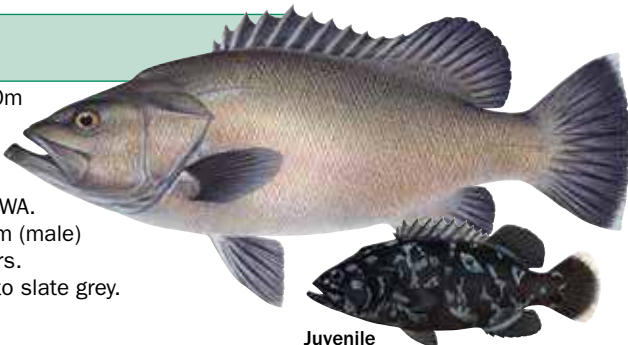
Polyprion americanus

Habitat: Deep offshore waters to 650m in depth, as far north as west of the Abrolhos Islands. Juveniles live on the surface.

Grows to: About 150cm and 55kg in WA.

Reproduction: Matures at about 80cm (male) and 95cm (female) and 11 to 15 years.

Features: Deep body, uniform brown to slate grey.



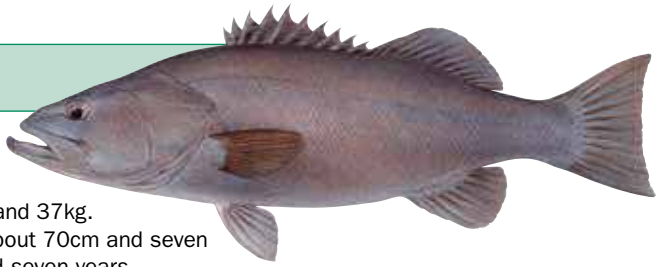
Hapuku

Polyprion oxygeneios

Habitat: Deep offshore waters to 650m in depth as far north as Lancelin. Juveniles live on the surface. **Grows to:** About 130cm and 37kg.

Reproduction: Males mature at about 70cm and seven years; females at about 76cm and seven years.

Features: Shallow body, brown to slate-grey, darker on fin tips. Juvenile has four dark bands across a pale body.



Blue-eye trevalla

Hyperoglyphe antarctica

Habitat: Offshore at depths of up to 900m over rough ground and at edges of steep drop-offs. Juveniles live on the surface.

Grows to: About 107cm and 19kg in WA.

Reproduction: Matures at about 60cm and five to seven years of age.

Features: Blue or mauve with a pale belly. Juveniles are yellowish-brown.



Western pigfish (blackspot pigfish)

Bodianus vulpinus

Habitat: Deeper offshore waters, particularly around rocky reefs.

Grows to: About 60cm in length.

Features: The male has a black and blue blotch on the dorsal fin. The female has long red blotches and lines along the body.



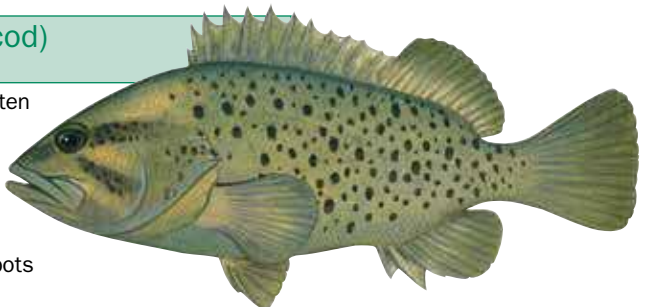
Western wirrah (wirrah cod)

Acanthistius serratus

Habitat: Exposed coastal reefs. Often inhabits underwater caves.

Grows to: About 50cm in length.

Features: Body is yellowish-brown, greyish-brown or greenish-brown. Spots on body, dark stripes behind eyes. Juveniles have few spots or none.



Western rock lobster

Panulirus cygnus

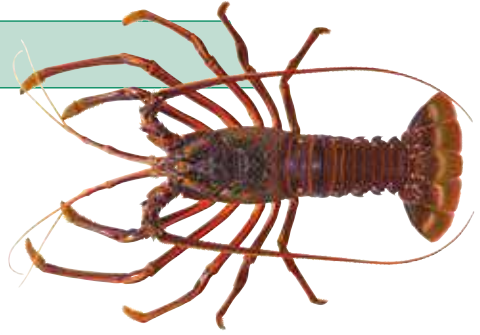
Habitat: Inshore reefs to the continental shelf.

Grows to: At least 17.5cm.

Life span: At least 28 years.

Reproduction: Females generally spawn at about six to seven years.

Features: Shorter, less dense spines on upper carapace than the southern rock lobster.



PELAGIC

Samsonfish

Seriola hippos

Habitat: Offshore reefs, over inner continental shelf.

Grows to: About 175cm and 55kg.

Life span: Around 32 years.

Features: Grey/purple back with yellow stripe through midline, elongated and robust body.



Yellowtail kingfish

Seriola lalandi

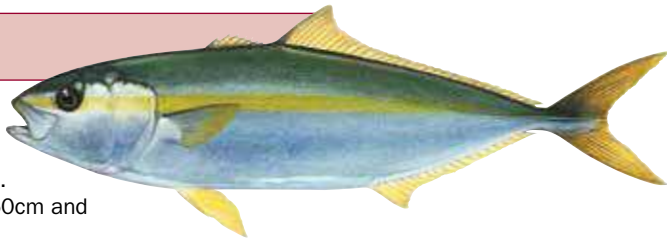
Habitat: Near coast, offshore coastal islands and reefs in temperate waters.

Grows to: About 190cm and 50kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 50cm and two years.

Life span: Around 21 years.

Features: Blue/green back with yellow stripe through mid-line.



Mahi-mahi (dolphin fish)

Coryphaena hippurus

Habitat: Warm oceanic waters, often schooling around floating objects.

Grows to: About 210cm and 40kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 40 to 50cm and four to five months old.

Life span: Around four years.

Features: Elongated body and humped head.



Spanish mackerel (narrow-barred Spanish mackerel)

Scomberomorus commerson

Habitat: Offshore and coastal reefs.

Grows to: About 240cm and 40kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 80cm and two years. **Life span:** At least 22 years.

Features: Banded pattern, elongated shape, fewer dorsal spines than its broad-barred relative.



Yellowfin tuna

Thunnus albacares

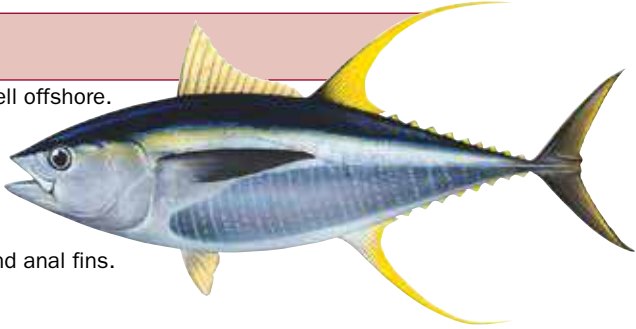
Habitat: Oceanic waters generally well offshore. Seasonally in temperate waters.

Grows to: About 210cm and 176kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 100cm and two to three years.

Life span: Around 10 years.

Features: Elongated yellow dorsal and anal fins.



NEARSHORE

Australian herring

Arripis georgianus

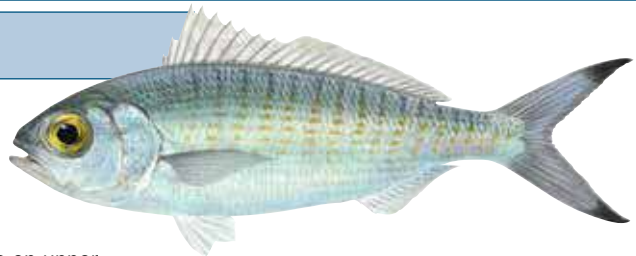
Habitat: Open coast, estuaries and inshore reefs.

Grows to: About 41cm and 0.8kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 19 to 21cm and two to three years.

Life span: Around 10 years.

Features: Rough scales, golden spots on upper surface and black tips on tail.



Western Australian salmon

Arripis truttaceus

Habitat: Coastal marine and continental shelf.

Grows to: About 96cm and 10kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 60cm and three to four years.

Life span: Around nine years.

Features: Smooth scales, yellow pectoral fin with black blotch at base, golden spots on upper surface.

Juvenile can be mistaken for an Australian herring (which has a larger eye and more rounded head).



Juvenile

Banded sweep

Scorpiis georgiana

Habitat: Inshore and offshore reefs.

Grows to: About 45cm and 2.5kg.

Features: Distinctive black cross-bands on body.



Blue mackerel

Scomber australasicus

Habitat: Around continental margins and islands, mainly in temperate seas.

Grows to: About 65cm and 2kg.

Features: Narrow broken bars on sides, clear fatty eyelid at front and back of eye, small scales.



Oriental bonito

Sarda orientalis

Habitat: Coastal seas.

Grows to: About 100cm and 10kg. **Features:** Distinguished by narrow horizontal stripes on upper part of body.



Southern garfish (garfish)

Hyporhamphus melanochir

Habitat: Coastal marine bays and inlets.

Grows to: About 50cm and 0.4kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 25cm and two to three years.

Life span: Around 10 years. **Features:** Bill, silver stripe on midline, prominent ridge between eye and nostril, elongated body.



Sea mullet

Mugil cephalus

Habitat: Abundant in estuaries and coastal bays. Mature fish migrate to open sea to spawn.

Grows to: About 80cm and 4kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 30cm and three to four years. **Life span:** Around 16 years.

Features: Large gelatinous eyelid and bluish spot on pectoral fin base.



Yelloweye mullet (pilch)

Aldrichetta forsteri

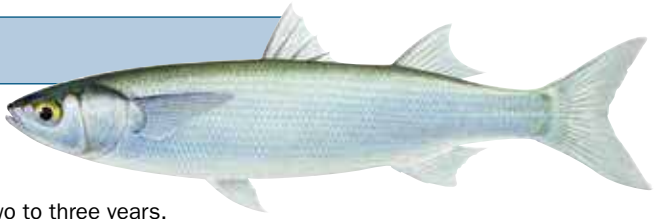
Habitat: Common over sandy bottoms in estuaries and coastal bays.

Grows to: About 50cm and 1kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about two to three years.

Life span: Around seven years.

Features: A yellow eye and has a narrower head and smaller scales than a sea mullet.



Mulloway

Argyrosomus hololepidotus (another name used is *Argyrosomus japonicus*)

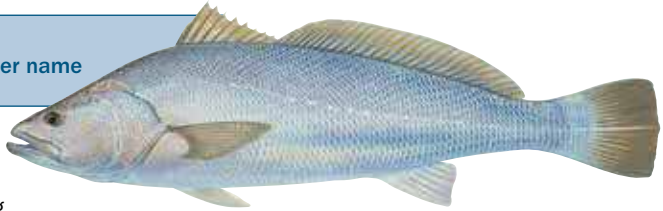
Habitat: Coastal embayments and estuaries, off beaches and inshore reefs.

Grows to: About 200cm and 74kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 90cm and six years.

Life span: Around 30 years.

Features: Silver/bronze sides, long dorsal fin and 'spade tail'.



Common blowfish (Banded toadfish)

Torquigener pleurogramma

POISONOUS

Habitat: Abundant in coastal waters and saline waters of estuaries.

Grows to: About 22cm.

Reproduction: Matures at about two years.

Life span: At least six years.

Features: Dark brown line along its side and narrow bars on its cheeks. Flesh is poisonous.



Silver trevally (skippy)

Pseudocaranx georgianus

Habitat: Coastal waters and estuaries.

Grows to: About 94cm and 10kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 28cm.

Life span: Around 18 years.

Features: Silvery white to pale blue, green/bronze back, dark spot on gill cover.



Snook

Sphyraena novaehollandiae



Habitat: Close to surface, near reefs and over seagrass beds in shallow water.

Grows to: About 109cm and 5.6kg. **Life span:** Around 20 years.

Features: Slender body, silvery at sides, large mouth with long canine teeth.

Squid

Order Teuthoidae

Habitat: Inshore marine and estuarine areas.

Grows to: About 60cm mantle length and 7kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 16 to 20cm mantle length.

Life span: Around one to two years.

Features: Eight arms, two tentacles, suckers with teeth and translucent feather-like quill beneath back.



Tailor

Pomatomus saltatrix

Habitat: Beaches, inshore reefs, estuaries.

Grows to: About 120cm and 14kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 35cm and two to three years old.

Life span: Around nine years.

Features: Prominent lower jaw, silver, elongated and compressed body.



Tarwhine (silver bream)

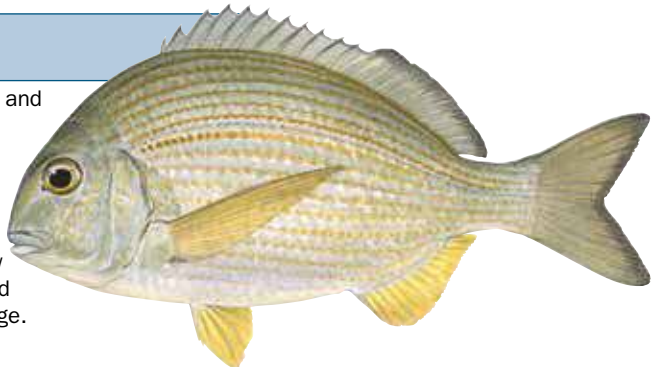
Rhabdosargus sarba

Habitat: Coastal marine, estuaries and offshore reefs to 35m deep.

Grows to: About 50cm and 2.5kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 17cm to 21cm and two to three years.

Life span: At least 12 years. **Features:** Silvery with yellow lines matching scale rows, anal and pelvic fins vary from yellow to orange.



Roe's abalone

Haliotis roei

Habitat: Reeftop platforms to a depth of five metres.

Grows to: About 12cm in shell length.

Reproduction: Matures at about two and a half years and 4cm in shell length.

Life span: At least 10 years.

Features: Grooved shell. Greenish/brown mantle on foot.



King George whiting

Sillaginodes punctata

Habitat: Coastal marine and estuaries, over sand or weed.

Grows to: About 72cm and 5kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 40cm and three to four years. **Life span:** Around 15 years.

Features: Small brown spots on sides, brown/bronze tinge on back.



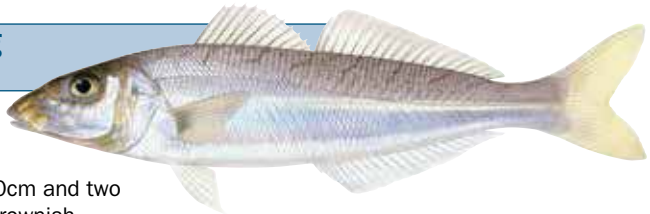
Southern school whiting

Sillago bassensis

Habitat: Sandy bottoms in estuaries and inshore waters.

Grows to: About 36cm and 0.6kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 20cm and two years old. **Features:** Thin lines of brownish spots on upper side.



Western school whiting

Sillago vittata

Habitat: Inshore marine.

Grows to: About 30cm and 0.2kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 13 to 16cm. **Features:** Distinctive dark blotch at base of pectoral fin.



Yellowfin whiting

Sillago schomburgkii

Habitat: Shallow sandy areas near estuary mouths and inshore waters.

Grows to: About 42cm and 0.7kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 18 to 20cm and two years.

Life span: Around 12 years.

Features: Yellow pelvic and anal fins, sides plain and silvery, pointed snout.



Brownspeckled wrasse

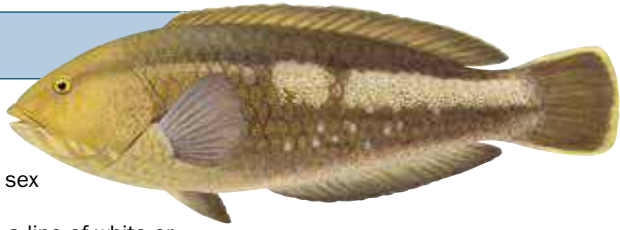
Notolabrus parilus

Habitat: Seagrass and coastal reefs.

Grows to: About 40cm and 1.8kg.

Reproduction: Matures as female at about 17cm and three years, changes sex to male at about 24cm and five years.

Features: Green to reddish brown with a line of white or orange spots along lateral line.



Western king wrasse

Coris auricularis

Habitat: Coastal reefs adjacent to sandy areas.

Grows to: About 40cm and 0.8kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 21cm and at least two years. Changes sex from female to male at about 25cm and five years.

Life span: Around 10 years.

Features: Females with red horizontal stripe through eye, males with brightly coloured fins and white vertical band behind pectoral fin.



Male

Female

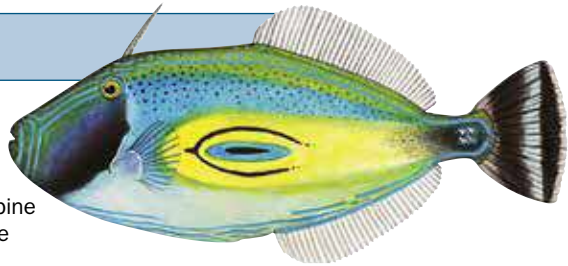
Horseshoe leatherjacket

Meuschenia hippocrepis

Habitat: Seagrass beds and moderately exposed reefs, occasionally found in offshore waters.

Grows to: About 64cm and 2kg.

Features: It can be distinguished from sixspine leatherjacket by darker face and black/white striped tail.



ESTUARINE

Yellowtail flathead (bar-tailed flathead)

Platycephalus westraliae

Habitat: Bottom dweller, on soft substrates in estuarine and coastal waters.

Grows to: About 76cm and 2.8kg.

Reproduction: Females mature at about 26cm and males at 19cm, when they are each about two years.

Features: Tapering body, dark bars on tail, eyes on top of head with ridges and spines.



VENOMOUS

Black bream

Acanthopagrus butcheri

Habitat: Estuaries and rivers.

Grows to: About 60cm and 4kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 15 to 20cm and two to five years.

Life span: Around 29 years.

Features: Silver/olive brown upper body, four to five vertical rows of scales between front of dorsal fin and lateral line.



Blue swimmer crab

Portunus armatus (formerly Portunus pelagicus)

Habitat: Bays, estuaries, muddy or sandy bottoms, intertidal areas to 60m deep.

Grows to: About 20cm carapace length, 80cm claw span and 1kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 8 to 9cm carapace length.

Life span: Around three to four years.

Features: Mottled blue in males and mottled brown in females, broad carapace, long claws.



Estuary cobbler (cobbler)

Cnidogobius macrocephalus

Habitat: Marine bays, inlets, lower-mid estuaries.

Grows to: About 91cm and 2.6kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 40cm and two and a half years.

Nests in burrows.

Life span: Around 13 years.

Features: Slender body, eel-like tail, flat head with four pairs of barbels around mouth. Venomous spine in dorsal and pectoral fins.



VENOMOUS

Smalltooth flounder

Pseudorhombus jenynsii

Habitat: Sandy and silty bottoms of estuaries and embayments.

Grows to: About 55cm and 1.5kg.

Reproduction: Matures at about 20cm.

Features: Several dark brown rings enclosing golden speckles on back, small teeth.



Before you go fishing, let someone know where you are going and contact them if your plans change. Always let them know when you return. The information in this guide is current at the date of printing, but may change. A separate guide on fishing rules is available. For the most up-to-date information on fishing, visit the Department of Fisheries website or your local Fisheries office.



Fish for the future

Further information

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T: (08) 9527 3699

www.fish.wa.gov.au

Keep sending us your skeletons and we could be sending you on a fishing trip of a lifetime!

We would like to thank all recreational fishers who have donated their fish skeletons ('frames') – your contributions are invaluable. However, we still need your fish skeletons for our vital research.

Everyone who makes a donation before 1 July 2013 will go into a draw to win a selection of great fishing prizes, including a fabulous week-long charter fishing trip for two to the Montebello Islands, courtesy of Montebello Island Safaris.

We need frames of dhufish, snapper, baldchin groper, Bight Redfish and redthroat emperor from the **West Coast Bioregion (Kalbarri to east of Augusta [115° 30' East longitude])**. Snapper, Bight redfish and

blue morwong are wanted from the **South Coast Bioregion (east of Augusta [115° 30'] to the WA/SA border)**. Frames of whiting (all species), Australian herring and tailor are required from the **West Coast and South Coast bioregions**.

Your help is essential to ensure there are fish for the future. For more information:

W: www.fish.wa.gov.au/frames
T: 9203 0111



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