



FACT SHEET

Blue Marlin

Makaira nigricans

Family: Istiophoridae

Other common names: Blou marlyn

Description

A robust but long and streamlined fish that is oval in cross-section. It has a sloping forehead and a sharp, spear-like bill. The general body colour of live specimens is cobalt-blue above and white below with faint vertical bars on the flanks. The dorsal fin height is equal to or exceeds the distance between the base of the pectoral fin and the base of the dorsal fin.

Distribution

A pan-tropical species occurring in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans, mainly between 35°N and 35°S latitude. In South African waters occasionally reaches as far south as Cape Town during summer.

Habitat

Epipelagic, oceanic species occurring in clear, warm surface waters greater than 24°C, normally above the thermocline. Not usually found close to land masses or islands unless there is a steep drop-off or canyon.

Feeding

Top predator feeding on a range of epipelagic fishes, especially smaller tunas and squids.

Movement

Extensive and seasonal migrations with fish migrating into higher latitudes during the summer months and returning to equatorial waters during the winter. Some evidence that males are more migratory.

Reproduction

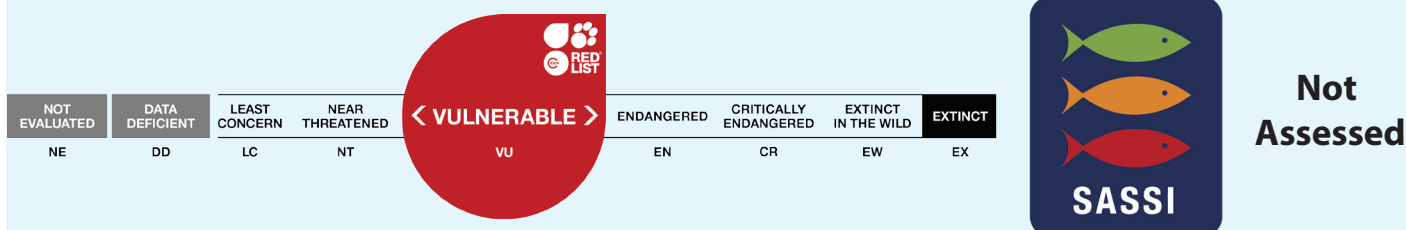
Males reach maturity at 140 cm eye fork length and females at 200 cm eye fork length corresponding to an age of 1-2 years. Females grow considerably larger than males. Spawning mainly occurs during summer and autumn in tropical waters less than 30° latitude.

Age and growth

They can reach a maximum length of 450 cm total length and a weight of 636 kg. They have been aged up to 27 years.

Current status

The status of blue marlin in the Indian Ocean has not been assessed. However, concerning declines in catch rates have been reported. Evaluated as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List (2010). South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) List: Not assessed.



Capture

Important bycatch (non-target) component of commercial fisheries in the Indian Ocean, being taken mainly by pelagic longlines, drift gill-nets and trolling lines. The catches of blue marlin are typically higher than those of black marlin and striped marlin combined. The mean annual catch of blue marlin in the Indian Ocean over the past decade was about 9 600 t. Blue marlin are occasionally captured by the recreational ski-boat fishermen off the KwaZulu-Natal coast, usually during summer, with most being hooked further offshore than other billfish species. Perhaps one of the most prized of all gamefish species which can be caught on lures and trolled fish baits.

Current recreational fishing regulations

Daily bag limit: 5 per person per day
Minimum size limit: None
Closed Season: None
Other regulations: No sale recreational species. However, allowed as a bycatch on pelagic longline vessels operating in South African waters so this is an anomaly in the legislation. Marine protected areas (MPAs): The highly migratory nature of blue marlin means that they are unlikely to receive benefit from protection in MPAs.

Reference

Information from the ORI Fish App. www.saambr.org.za



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