



FACT SHEET

Flathead Mullet

Mugil cephalus

Family: Mugilidae

Other common names: Flathead grey mullet, Platkop-harder

Description

An elongate fish but more robust than other mullet species and has a distinctly blunt snout. The body colour is silver, but it is slightly darker above with dusky stripes along the flanks. The eyes are covered by well-developed adipose eyelids covering most of the pupil.

Distribution

Cosmopolitan, occurring in coastal waters between 42°N and 42°S latitude. Found around the entire southern African coast.

Habitat

Adults are found in estuaries and the nearshore marine environment. Juveniles are attracted to and are largely dependent on estuaries as nursery areas.

Feeding

They feed on benthic microalgae, detritus and small invertebrates.

Movement

Known to migrate in large shoals down to the mouths of estuaries to spawn. Adults also known to undertake extensive movements at sea in other parts of the world.

Reproduction

They reach maturity at 44-48 cm total length and an age of three years. They have an extended spawning season between autumn and spring (May-November). Spawning takes place along the east coast of South Africa in the nearshore marine environment, often in the vicinity of estuary mouths.

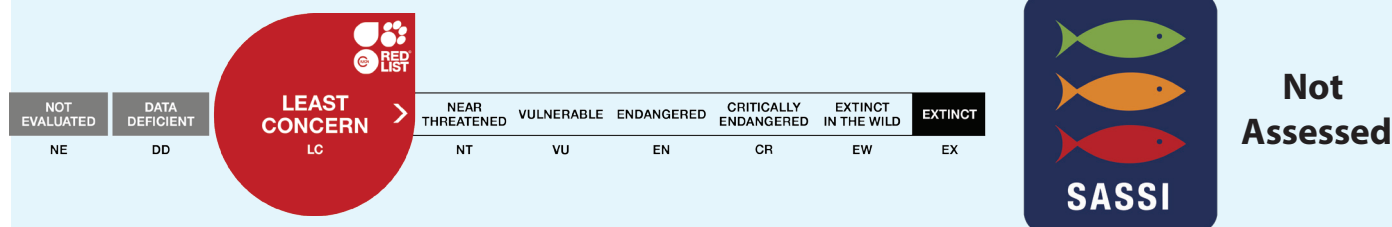
Age and growth

They can reach a maximum size of 80 cm total length and a weight of 8 kg. They have been aged up to a maximum of 16 years.

Current status

Little is known about the status of this species. Their abundance has declined considerably in Lake St Lucia due to the drought and the prolonged closure of the mouth. They have been evaluated as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List (2004).

South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) List: Not assessed.



Capture

Seldom caught on line but often caught using cast-nets and used for bait. This species is mainly caught in illegal estuarine gillnet fisheries along the KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape coast. They are also caught in the artisanal trap fishery in Kosi Bay and the beach seine-net fishery off Durban.

Current recreational fishing regulations

Daily bag limit: 50 per person per day

Minimum size limit: None

Closed Season: None

Other regulations: Estuarine gillnetting is illegal on the eastern seaboard of South Africa.

Marine protected areas (MPAs): Estuarine protected areas are likely to play an important role in the conservation of this species.

Reference

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



INCORPORATING

