



FACT SHEET

Yellowbelly Rockcod

Epinephelus marginatus

Family: Serranidae

Other common names: Dusky grouper, Geelpens-klipkabeljou

Description

One of the larger rockcods, this species has a robust body and a large mouth. The body is brown with a yellow belly and chin. There are numerous irregular greenish-white blotches on the body and dorsal fin. The second dorsal, caudal and anal fins have a thin white margin.

Distribution

Western Africa (Angola) to Europe (Mediterranean Sea), southern Africa, East coast of South America; also reports from southern Madagascar. In southern African waters this species is found from Inhambane in southern Mozambique to Cape Point.

Habitat

They are found on rocky reefs from the surf-zone down to depths of 200 m.

Feeding

Crustaceans, fish and squid.

Movement

Highly resident based on tagging data and underwater observations. Larger fish move out to deeper reefs with an increase in size/age. Some evidence of a northward movement of sub-adults as no spawning occurs south of KwaZulu-Natal. Generally smaller, reproductively inactive fish are caught in the Eastern and Western Cape.

Reproduction

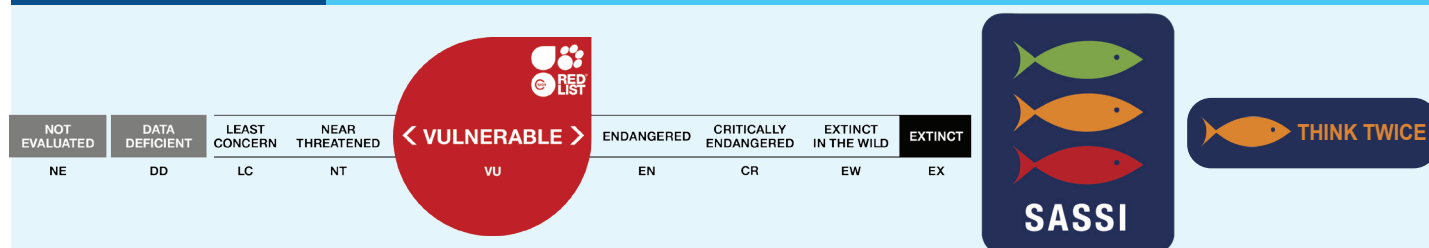
Females mature at 62 cm and males at 80 cm total length equivalent to an age of 6.5 and 9.5 years respectively. They change sex from female to male. Spawning takes place in summer (October-February) on reefs in KwaZulu-Natal and in southern Mozambique. There is some evidence to suggest that this species forms small spawning aggregations.

Age and growth

They can reach a maximum size of 113 cm total length and a weight of 27.5 kg. They have been aged up to a maximum of 16 years in South African waters.

Current status

A stock assessment conducted in the mid-1990s showed that the stock had been overfished to approximately 33% of their pristine spawner biomass. There have been no subsequent assessments but available catch data show no evidence of recovery. They have been evaluated as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List (2018). South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) List: Orange.



Capture

They make a fairly small contribution to ski-boat catches in KwaZulu-Natal - 1.3% by weight to commercials, 1.7% to recreationals; around 1% to spearfishing catches and 0.3% to recreational shore angling catches. They only contribute 0.1% by weight to semi-industrial lineboat catches in southern Mozambique.

Current recreational fishing regulations

Daily bag limit: 1 per person per day
Minimum size limit: 60 cm total length
Closed Season: None
Other regulations: None
Marine protected areas (MPAs): This highly resident species is well suited to protection within no-take MPAs along the east coast of South Africa. Research in the Pondoland MPA for example has shown considerably greater abundance and larger mean size of yellowbelly rockcod in the no-take area. The iSimangaliso and the adjacent Ponto do Ouro MPAs are likely to provide important protection for adult spawning populations.

Reference

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



INCORPORATING

