



THE UPDATE

Captain's Blog



Fishing industry framed by cats

Disease is a bigger threat to endangered dolphins than commercial fishing.

That is the finding of a new scientific assessment by a team from NIWA, Massey University and Quantifish, led by marine scientist Dr Jim Roberts.

The study of Hector's and Maui dolphins has led to a revised understanding of their biology, their distribution and their main threats.

Toxoplasmosis, a disease caused by a hardy microscopic parasite that is spread by cat faeces and carried in streams and rivers to the ocean, has been found to be the main non-fishery cause of death.

It killed nine of 55 post-weaning age Hector's and Maui dolphins for which carcasses were recovered since 2007.

Other causes of death included bacterial and fungal infections as well as fishery bycatch and predation.

"The numbers of dolphins dying from toxoplasmosis are likely to be much greater than commercial fishery deaths," NIWA's Dr Robert said.

"They may add up to hundreds each year for both the east and west coast dolphin populations."

Maui dolphins are found off the west coast of the North Island and number just over 60.

They are a closely related sub-species of Hector's dolphins which are much more numerous, with a population of about 15,000.

Seafood NZ welcomed the research and hoped it would lead to more informed debate.

The toxoplasmosis threat has been known for some time – it was identified as far back as 2013 in a Massey University study – but this is the most emphatic finding.

Blaming commercial fishing for Maui dolphin deaths has been the default position of the anti-fishing lobby.

This is despite the lack of evidence, the closure of 6200 square kilometres of coastal waters to set netting and 1700 square kilometres to trawl fishing and almost 100 percent observer coverage in known Maui territory.

There has now been more than 2000 days of observer coverage with no Maui dolphin sighted, let alone captured.

The last Maui death attributed to commercial fishing was in 2002.

The 18-month scientific study has found the dolphins can breed earlier, live longer and are capable of faster population growth than previously thought, which makes them more resilient to human threats.

The experts undertaking the risk assessment used data obtained from aerial surveys of the dolphins' locations and then related it to the turbidity of waters around New Zealand.

Their main food source – red cod and small inshore fish – prefer turbid (cloudy) water as well .

So does their main predator – sevengill sharks.

Being able to determine where the dolphins go allows scientists to predict much more accurately where commercial fishery deaths could occur and therefore alleviate the risks posed.

The media reaction to what some would see as an inconvenient truth, has been varied.

Disease bigger worry than bycatch for rare dolphins - NIWA, Radio NZ reported.

Rural reporter Eric Frykberg, an old style journo who plays it straight, said the seafood industry's responsibility for the decline of rare dolphins has been downgraded in new research.

The NZ Herald accurately headlined: Microscopic parasite spread by cats found to be of greater risk to dolphins than commercial fishing.

And the struggling Stuff?

An alarmist, confused report at the weekend blamed the commercial fishing industry for dolphin deaths and included an emotive photo of dead Hector's dolphins in a net.

This oft repeated image is distressing.

What the caption did not say was that the dolphins were caught in a recreational fishing net at Jacksons Bay some years ago.

A little misleading perhaps?

The same image, supplied by DOC, features in Raewyn Peart's *Dolphins of Aotearoa* (p263) where it is correctly captioned.

Stuff is yet to report the NIWA research.



New Zealand Seafood Industry
Conference and Technical Day

2019 Conference programme confirmed

The [NIWA technical day](#) on August 8 will have a strong focus on innovation and the environment, with [speakers](#) from NIWA, Mt Cook Alpine Salmon, the University of Waikato, Plant & Food Research, and Scion to name a few. Later in the day the focus will turn to electronic reporting with speakers from Fisheries Inshore NZ, Fisheries New Zealand, the technology providers and FishServe. The day will conclude with a presentation from MSC, which will be followed by a poster session and 'Blue Drinks' hosted by MSC.

The [conference on August 9](#) will begin with conference registration and morning tea, which will give delegates time to arrive and network prior to a full day of future focussed topics.

Rabobank's Gorjan Nikolik will headline the day as the Sanford keynote speaker. Craig Ellison will provide an industry scorecard update and Dr Richard Ford from Fisheries New Zealand will provide the latest update on our sustainable fish stocks.

Maintaining our property rights is key to the successful future of the seafood industry. A panel comprising Western Rock Lobster's Matt Taylor, TOKM chief executive Dion Tuuta, Tom McClurg and Mike Arbuckle will delve into this topic. Chris Finlayson will also talk about treaty settlements and where National went wrong over the Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary.

US Ambassador Scott Brown will tackle the tricky topic of doing trade deals with economies the size of the United States and China and Sanford's Lisa Martin will explore whether we are moving fast enough with respect to sustainability.

Graeme Sinclair will provide a sneak peek into the third series of Ocean Bounty and our sector will be celebrated once more with the fourth annual Seafood Star Awards.

With conference being held on a Friday, delegates will be encouraged to dress down and relax. Smart casual attire is encouraged. The conference sessions will be slightly longer than usual but will be book-ended with longer networking opportunities. A happy hour and

the ANZ cocktail function at the AJ Hackett Bungy Centre will round up the day. This is one not to be missed particularly with Moana New Zealand on board as the bungy sponsor.

The full [programme](#), [speaker profiles](#) and [sponsor details](#) are now available on the conference website.

[Register now.](#)

Seafood Stars Awards

The 2019 Seafood Stars Awards are open for nominations. The awards are a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our industry people and their achievements. This year's award categories include:

- Future Development and Innovation Award
- Young Achiever Award
- Longstanding Service Award

For more information on each category [visit our website](#), or [download the form](#) to nominate someone today.

Sixty three new fisheries projects for the books

Fisheries New Zealand has announced that 63 new fisheries research projects will be added to its research proposals for the 2019/2020 year.

\$3.3 million has been proposed for inshore finfish projects examining the abundance of blue cod around Banks Peninsula (BCO3) and North Canterbury, a review of management procedures used in FLA3 and a stock assessment of SNA8, among other projects.

Inshore shellfish fisheries received a proposed \$1.1 million towards a commercial catch sampling programme for pāua, a SCA7 biomass survey in the Sounds and more.

\$1 million has been set aside for rock lobster stock assessments to gain an understanding of their biomass and \$630,000 has been allocated for Highly Migratory Species; specifically, Southern bluefin tuna, striped marlin and swordfish projects.

Deepwater fisheries received the largest proposed allocation, \$5.7 million, of which \$3.9 million has been allocated to Southern blue whiting (SBW6I) and orange roughy (ORH 3B) acoustic surveys.

Aquatic environment research is expecting \$2.3 million this year, with projects ranging from black petrel population monitoring to a trial of underwater bait setters.

The projects will contribute to ongoing fisheries research into recreational fishing, inshore fish stocks and the impact of fishing.

Approximately \$22 million is spent on research each year and is the backbone of New Zealand's fisheries management system, Manager Fisheries Science Rich Ford said.

"We run an annual process to prioritise our fisheries research based on the needs of fisheries management plans, Threat Management Plans, National Plans of Action and any new issues or trends that emerge in New Zealand's fisheries.

"Fisheries New Zealand has over 30 years of scientific research material on fisheries, which we are continuously adding to and gaining further insight into the marine environment."

Project decisions will be finalised later in the year following consultation with stakeholders who fund the majority of the research.

Seagrass home to stronger snapper

NIWA researcher Christine Stewart has found that seagrass nurseries hold an important role in the physical development of snapper.

Juvenile snapper from three subtidal seagrass nurseries in Parengarenga, Rangaunu and Whangarei harbours were compared with fish in six non-seagrass nurseries to understand how growth and condition varies across locations.

Fish in subtidal seagrass habitats had significantly faster growth rates and were heavier for their length than fish from other habitats. At 40 days of age post-settlement, seagrass juveniles weighed 1.45 times more than non-seagrass fish, increasing to 1.87 times by 70 days of age.

Stewart's research is now focused on ageing Hauraki Gulf juveniles. Data will have important inputs into a nursery habitat simulation model being developed in the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment programme.



Kraken? Sea monster? Red Squid.

For those inspired by stories of the Kraken, here's one for you. This beast was recently brought aboard the *FV Independent* while mid-water trawling for arrow squid at the Snares. Having not seen a squid like this before, Independent Fisheries Ltd operations manager Stephen Bishop notified scientists at NIWA and AUT. Heather Braid, from the AUT Squid Laboratory, believes it to be a red squid (*Ommastrephes* species), which can grow to 60cm mantle length and are related to arrow squid (*Nototodarus* species). Red squid are rare in New Zealand so the lab is excited that the specimen has been donated to NIWA's invertebrate collection to inform future studies. Should your vessels identify any unusual species, it is worth taking a picture and contacting NIWA so these observations can contribute to New Zealand marine science.



FV Independent hauled in a monster of a catch, what scientists believe to be a red squid.

Sir Rob McLeod honoured as Knight Companion

Sir Rob McLeod of Ngāti Porou was honoured as a Knight Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit this week for his services to business and Māori.

McLeod has been a champion for small businesses and entrepreneurship, was a key driver of Māori development and a supporter of trans-Tasman gender equality and indigenous engagement. He also served on the establishment team for Māori development agency, Te Puni Kokiri.

McLeod was appointed as a member of the Capital Markets Taskforce in 2008 and has been the lead negotiator for Te Haeata, the Ngāti Porou Treaty Settlement Committee.

CFO awards event organiser Steve Scott said those who know McLeod often refer to his rigorous intellect and tendency to think in frameworks. McLeod uses that approach to champion diversity within corporates, Scott said.

"He is quoted as saying his success in life derives from the opportunities provided by two strong-willed and nurturing families. The one family he married into and the other one he was born into. This has been enhanced by the role models he has met along life's pathway."



Sir Rob McLeod was the recipient of the 2019 Outstanding Contribution to Finance & Business Award at the annual New Zealand CFO awards this year.

News

The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC), ECO, Forest and Bird, Greenpeace, LegaSea and WWF-New Zealand are urging the public to sign a petition to the Minister of Fisheries Stuart Nash and Minister of Conservation Eugenie Sage, in a bid to ban bottom trawling on seamounts and other ecologically sensitive areas.

A 1267sqkm area of sea has been tagged as a reserve network by the Government this week, spanning from Timaru to Waipapa Point in Southland, *Otago Daily Times* reported. The network includes six marine reserves that ban commercial and recreational fishing. Five type-two marine protection areas allow most recreational fishing and some commercial fishing depending on catch method. Dunedin man Ate Heinman, a commercial fisherman for 47 years, said fishing areas would become crowded and some businesses could potentially fail as a result of the reserve network. "People are going to have to shift their effort away from those reserves and sit on top of someone else." Although the ocean was a big place, different species were caught in certain places, he said. University of Otago marine science senior lecturer Chris Hepburn said the network was a "good first step". The scientific community he represented on the forum wanted a lot more marine protection, he said. Fishing was definitely something which needed to be controlled to protect marine biodiversity, however there are many other problems still needing to be faced, including the impact of sedimentation going from land to sea, he said. "All of these things are connected, but we had one tool - to control fishing."

Check out the latest Seafood Magazines



