



# Port Elizabeth Deep Sea Angling Club

*The Conservation Minded Club*

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## **Newsletter – March 2015.**

The fishing calendar is quite full and busy at this time of the year and we urge our anglers to keep an eye on the Pedsac website for more information on upcoming events and competitions. As per usual, this month's newsletter will also include some announcements and urgent requests from the committee.

### **Monthly Steak Evenings**

The second steak night was held on Friday, the 6<sup>th</sup> of March and coincided with the Over's and Under's entry and boat draw. A big crowd turned out as expected. Peter Alexandris walked away with the night's jackpot draw valued at R1,160-00 in cash.

Niven Marcus provided some good tunes and kept the crowds captivated with his renditions of Purple Rain and many other firm favourites. Be sure to catch Niven Marcus at PEDSAC with future Steak Nights and other events.

### **Member's Boats on Transnet land.**

Transnet served Pedsac with a final ultimatum to have scrap boats and other items removed that is parked or left on Transnet land. The club has sent a mail containing Transnet's official ultimatum out to all members to have abandoned assets and boats removed by 20 March 2015.

Should any person fail to remove their boats or other abandoned assets, Transnet will remove and dispose of these items to defray the cost of removal.

The Pedsac committee feels that we have done enough to convey the message as we have sent numerous mails and other communication out over the last few weeks to try and resolve this matter. We also urge members to park their boats that are currently in use, but still left on Transnet ground in a responsible way without obstructing parking spaces and the usual flow of traffic at Pedsac. We are currently negotiating solutions with Transnet and this will be communicated with all members very shortly.

### **Repairs of boats within the harbour.**

Transnet has instructed Pedsac that under no circumstances may boats be repaired on Transnet owned land within the Port of Port Elizabeth. This includes the slipway and the land across the road and adjacent to Pedsac.

This request includes the following:

1. All structural and fibreglass repairs of boats.
2. Mechanical repairs of boats.
3. Painting of boats.
4. Servicing of boat engines.

Boats must be moved to the harbour slipway / dry-dock where fishing trawlers, chokka boats and other commercial vessels usually gets repaired and overhauled.

Arrangements can be made with the Slipway / Dry Dock manager and a piece of the hard will be allocated to the boat owner at a nominal cost to conduct any repair or servicing.

### **BLG Logistics Tuna Classic.**

We are barely 7 weeks away from the Tuna Classic and the excitement is running high.

Ford will once again sponsor a Bonanza prize comprising of a new Ranger 2.2 Diesel Super Cab kitted out to the hilt for a new record Tuna that will beat last year's record of 102,7kg.

Ford will also be sponsoring the inaugural Ford Broadbill Night Challenge which will be fished concurrent to the Tuna Classic on a night deemed safe enough to stay out on the continental shelf under controlled circumstances for safety. This will be a controlled event and skippers will therefore be exempted from having to have a night rating to take part.

Rules and conditions will be discussed during the skippers briefing.

## **Lifting of the Copper Steenbras Ban – Feedback on the aftermath.**

I am sure by now most of you will have heard that the ban on Copper Steenbras has been lifted for recreational fishers. All clubs and anglers should applaud Border Deep Sea Angling Association, whom had the courage and determination to take the challenge up on behalf of all anglers, other provinces and clubs. Considering they were up against the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (first respondent), the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries (second respondent), the Consultative Advisory Forum for Marine Living Resources (third respondent) and the Line Fish Scientific Working Group (fourth respondent) their victory is most commendable.

However, litigation comes at an enormous cost to Border. Although the award was with cost, Border Deep Sea Angling has outlaid a huge amount of funds (R 549,162-58) and have had numerous fundraising projects, but there remains a shortfall of some R286,000-00.

One may ask as to why finance is required when the costs should be recovered from MCM; this is only partly true because there may be an appeal. However, it is agreed that if and when Border Deep Sea Angling Association receive the final ordered taxed costs from MCM, monies will be repaid to all contributors on a pro-rata basis.

It is on this note that EPDSAA appeal to all affiliated clubs and its members to consider a donation towards these costs. We must also take cognisance of the fact that this court ruling has set a precedent for future angling challenges which could benefit all clubs and provinces going forward with any legal challenge, and in fact, the current pending implementation of both MPA and pending MPA Zone Classifications that are being workshop'd right now, (Tugela, Aliwal and Shelley Beach) are being challenged in a similar vein as how Border approached their banning issue. This was a land mark case that reminds us of what our rights are, and we are starting to see the fruits of this, albeit reluctantly by certain officials.

Taking into account, BDSAA have committed to repaying all contributors back once the case is finalised.

Pedsac will launch a fundraising campaign and ask all members and patrons to donate something towards the cause. We will provide a donation form at the Pedsac bar for this purpose shortly.

### **Kob facts.**

We previously covered some facts about the declining stocks of Kob and would like to expand on this matter by educating our members on the different species of Kob that we target in our waters. Very few people know the difference between the species and we will provide the information to help you identify them in future.

We find 3 distinct species of Kob in the waters around Algoa Bay such as the Dusky Kob, Silver Kob and to a lesser extent, the Square Tail Kob. Studies have also found some 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Hybrids of Silver and Dusky Kob inter-breeds, as a possible result due to the extreme low numbers of available spawning stock.

A fourth specie of Kob is found in Natal and is called the Snapper Kob which is a small breed rarely growing larger than 1.5 kg's and can be identified by the 2 large canine like fangs.

It is interesting to note that Geelbek and Baardman are close relatives of Kob and belongs to the same family of the sub-species of Sciaenidae.

### **Dusky Kob**



Dusky Kob (Dagga Salmon, Dagga, Boer Kabeljou) is by far the largest of the South African Kob species and can be found from Cape Arugulas to Mozambique and forms 3 distinct genetic breeding groups. They can grow up to 90kg's in weight and they inhabit shallow coastal waters and regularly

enter estuaries throughout their life cycle. Their scientific name is *Argyrosomus Japonicus* and as can be seen in their name, is also distributed throughout the Indo-Pacific regions from Madagascar, Indo-Japan and Australia. They are known by names such as the Japanese Meagre Fish (Madagascar / Japan / Indo-Japan Islands) and Jew Fish or Mulloway in Australia.

Dusky Kob can be identified by the gold/green silver sheen that quickly turns to a greyish brown colour when they die after being caught. Dusky Kob has a very peculiar strong metallic smell and they excrete less slime compared to other Kob after being caught.

Dusky Kob reaches sexual maturity at a length of 900mm – 1000mm at about 5-6 years of age. Most adults migrate from the Cape to KwaZulu-Natal to spawn between August and November. Spawning generally occurs inshore in 10 - 15 m of water. Juveniles enter the upper reaches of estuaries where they remain until they are about 15cm. They then move into the lower reaches of estuaries and the near-shore marine environment.

Most Kob species are voracious, shoaling predators and some species have become highly specialised for feeding in their muddy, murky environment. Their lateral line system (a sensory system found in all fish that enables them to detect vibrations and pressure changes in the water) is very well developed and this, in conjunction with the sensory micro-barbels which some have on their snouts, makes the Kob less reliant on sight when feeding. Small fish, crustaceans such as prawns and crabs, and molluscs such as squid and cuttlefish are all eaten by the various Kob species.

The Dusky Kob is very suitable for captive breeding and farming and a purpose built hatchery is currently operating in the East London IDZ where fish are bred and raised for production purposes.

### Silver Kob



Silver Kob, or *Argyrosomus inodorus* is the most widely spread of the Kob species found in Southern Africa and ranges from Angola around the Southern tip of Africa as far as the Kei region.

As can be seen in the scientific name, the Silver Kob does not have the same strong metallic smell as the Dusky Kob after being caught and is relatively odourless. They do excrete more slime than the Dusky Kob though.

Silver Kob is more abundant than their Dusky Kob cousins and appears to be the most widely caught by ski-boat anglers. They have 3 distinct genetic breeding pools namely one on the west coast and 2 pools on the South Coast and South East Coast. These fish are mainly found in deeper waters off-shore and are usually caught in depths ranging from 35 meters to 70 meters, but are regularly caught by inshore trawlers in depths of up to 200 meters.

The head and body is silvery, becoming a green or brown with a bronze sheen dorsally. The inside of the mouth is pale yellow to yellowish grey. It attains a smaller size (1.5 m or 35kg and 25 years) than the dusky Kob (*A. japonicus*) which can attain a mass of 70+kg. Silver and dusky Kob differs in several internal characteristics. The dusky Kob has large urinary bladders while the silver Kob's urinary bladders are rudimentary. There are also further differences in the number and configuration of swim bladder appendages, the configuration of the otoliths and other internal differences. They are, however, difficult to separate on external characteristics. However, the silver Kob has a narrower, longer caudal peduncle and a longer pectoral fin than the dusky Kob. The silver Kob was named *inodorus* by Marc Griffiths because he first suspected it was different from the dusky Kob when he noticed it did not have the typical brassy or metallic smell of fresh dusky Kob. The silver and dusky Kob belongs to the family Sciaenidae. The sciaenids are also called croakers or drums because they can produce a variety of sounds by means of muscles that vibrate the gas-filled swim bladder. In the silver Kob these drumming muscles (along the inside of the body cavity) are only present in males, while the dusky Kob has drumming muscles in both sexes.

The silver Kob occurs from Angola to the Kei River. Between Cape Agulhas and the Kei River the adults are rarely found in the surf zone or estuaries, but are commonly caught by ski-boaters and trawlers at 10-120m. West of Cape Agulhas and up the west coast to Namibia silver Kob is found in the surf zone.

Silver Kob feed on pelagic fish, shrimps and squid. Females mature at about 31-38cm and males at 29-31cm. On the other hand, the dusky Kob matures at about 1m. On the Namibian coast spawning adults migrate south in summer to spawning grounds at Sandwich and Meob Bays.

The larvae drift north with the current to nursery areas off the west coast Recreational Area. When juveniles reach about two years of age they move further north to adult feeding grounds in the Skeleton Coast Park waters. At the end of the spawning season adult silver Kob leave the spawning grounds and return to the adult feeding grounds. The growth of the silver Kob from southern Namibia (maximum 19 years) differs from that of silver Kob in northern Namibia (maximum 28 years). It is highly regarded as a food fish and is an important recreational and commercial species. In Namibia, where silver Kob is the most important line fish caught by ski-boaters and shore anglers, they comprise about 70% of all recreational shore angling catches. Catches have decreased in recent years, hence the establishment of strict catch restrictions in Namibia and South Africa.

### Squairetail Kob



The squairetail Kob (*Argyromus thorpei*) is a member of the Sciaenidae family, which includes Kob, geelbek and baardman. Squairetail Kob mostly occurs between Algoa Bay and KwaZulu-Natal and is one of three main Kob species caught in South Africa, all of which were previously thought to belong to just one species.

It attains a size of up to 1.2 m or 14kg (Max. 10 years of age.) and reaches sexual maturity at 35cm. Spawning occurs between August and October. They were previously one of the most important species to inshore commercial and recreational fishers, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, making up 37% of total commercial catch. However, this figure has now dropped to 5% and the stock is considered to have collapsed. This species is endemic to Southern Africa and is likely to be placed on the Sassi Red list within the next year.

They are a non-migratory shoaling species which mostly occur in coastal waters but are seldom found inshore. Adults are found over rocky reefs while juveniles tend to be found on shallow (15-50m) soft bottom habitats where they are often caught as by-catch in shallow water prawn trawls. Squairetail Kob are mainly caught in the traditional line fishery which operates from small ski- and deck boats within the inshore zone along most of the Eastern Cape and Kwazulu Natal coastline. They are also a popular target for recreational line fishers and juveniles are caught as by-catch in the shallow water prawn trawl fishery in KwaZulu-Natal; squairetail Kob caught in shallow water prawn trawl fishery are considered less sustainable than the line caught animals. Line fishing is a relatively selective fishing method which has few impacts on the marine environment and is carried out with either a rod and reel or a hand line. There is generally very little by-catch or habitat damage caused by this fishing method. However, some species targeted by this fishery are over-exploited or collapsed because of their specific life history characteristics.

### Kob Hybrids



Research has found some distinct 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Dusky / Silver Kob hybrids in a mass sampling to determine the abundance and distribution of Kob along the Eastern Cape coast due to overfishing and the rapidly declining stock. Although the occurrence is relatively small, it shows that the declining stock has had an adverse impact on the breeding patterns possibly playing a role in this inter-breeding due to the low available numbers of spawning stock.

Hybridisation between fish species can play a significant role in evolutionary processes and can influence management and conservation planning, however, this phenomenon has been widely understudied, especially in marine organisms. The distribution limits of two sciaenid species (silver Kob, *Argyrosomus inodorus*, and dusky Kob, *A. japonicus*) partly overlap along the South African coast, where both species have undergone severe depletion due to overfishing. Following the identification of a number of possible cases of species misidentification or hybridisation (21 out of 422 individuals), nuclear and mitochondrial DNA data (12 microsatellite loci and 562bp of the COI gene) were analysed to investigate the genetic composition of these individuals. Results indicated a field-based species misidentification rate of approximately 2.8% and a rate of natural hybridisation of 0.7%. Interestingly, all hybrid fish resulted from first-generation (F1) hybridisation events, which occurred exclusively between silver Kob females and dusky Kob males. Whether hybridisation is the result of natural events (such as secondary contact following a shift in distribution range), or anthropogenic activities (size-selective pressure due to overfishing), these findings have important implications for critical recovery and future management of these species in the wild.

### **Closing.**

Please feel free to mail any photo's of any significant or good catches to [denise@pedsac.co.za](mailto:denise@pedsac.co.za) or [richard@lmcservices.co.za](mailto:richard@lmcservices.co.za) and we will post them on our website and Facebook pages. All members are welcome to send us contributions for the next news letter and this can be mailed to the same email addresses provided.

Tight Lines

Richard Donaldson.