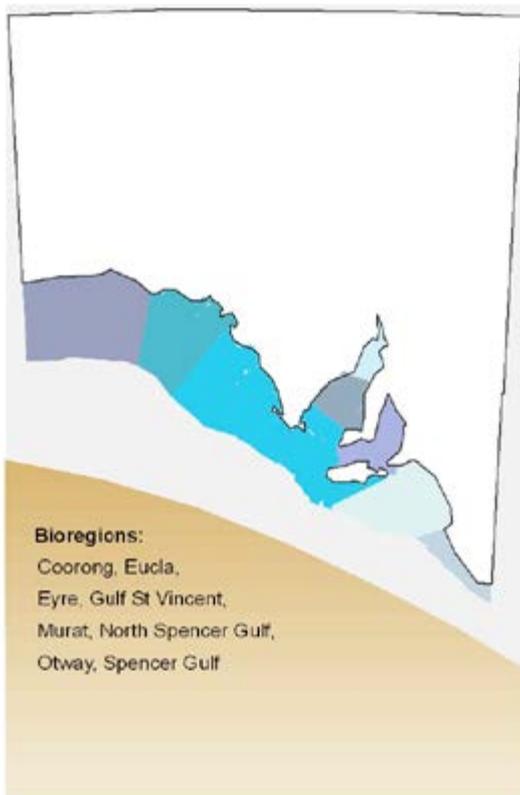


Western Blue Groper

Achoerodus gouldii



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.

Western Blue Groper are large, long-lived slow-growing fish that are closely related to the Eastern Blue Groper (*Achoerodus viridis*). They are the largest bony fish species found on the rocky reefs of South Australia. Western Blue Groper can live for up to 70 years, and females do not reach maturity until around 15 years of age, and for males it takes even longer. They grow up to 1.7 metres long and are fully grown at around 30 years old. When fully grown they have few natural predators.

They live in small groups with one male, one or two females and several juveniles. The male is always the biggest fish in these groups and is blue, while the females are a greener colour.

They are an important species for maintaining the balance in their ecosystem by controlling the numbers of other animals such as crabs and sea urchins. If Western Blue Groper weren't there, these other animals might eat too much algae from the reefs, leaving them barren and unsuitable for other species.

Diet

When feeding, Western Blue Groper use their strong teeth to prise molluscs and crustaceans off the rocks. Adults are able to dislocate their jaw to bite off large pieces of reef algal mats and then suck off the tiny crustaceans that live in them.

Breeding

Western Blue Groper are sequential hermaphrodites, this means that they are all born female, and some females turn into males at around 35 years of age. They spawn between early winter and mid spring.

Habitat

These fish can be found around the southern coast from Geraldton in Western Australia to west of Melbourne. Smaller fish are found in sheltered reef areas, but larger ones migrate to deeper exposed waters. Adults are territorial and have a home range.

Threats

Overfishing is a major threat to the Western Blue Groper, especially as they are so slow-growing. This means it takes them a long time to replenish their numbers, and if young fish are caught they never get the chance to reproduce. Marine pollution is another problem as it limits the amount of food available to them.



Sex change! All Western Blue Gropers are born females, and some later change to be males! When they change sex they also change colour! If the male is removed from the small group the dominant female can change sex to take his place!

Conservation

Western Blue Gropers are very inquisitive when they see divers. This makes them vulnerable to spearfishers. Many divers are now aware of their plight and choose to enjoy their company rather than killing them.

You can help the Western Blue Groper by:

- putting rubbish in its place as litter makes its way to the ocean from everywhere
- bringing a bag along for collecting rubbish when you go for a walk along the beach
- not polluting – anything washed down a storm-water drain goes straight out to sea.



Photo by Simon Bryars

Western Blue Groper



Photo Female WBG, Simon Bryars

Western Blue Groper

For further information

Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

Eastwood: (08) 8273 9100

Gawler: (08) 8523 7700

Lobethal: (08) 8389 5900

Willunga: (08) 8550 3400

Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

Northern Adelaide: (08) 8406 8289

Barossa: (08) 8563 8436

Central Adelaide: (08) 8234 7255

Southern Adelaide: (08) 8384 0176

Southern Fleurieu: (08) 8551 0524

