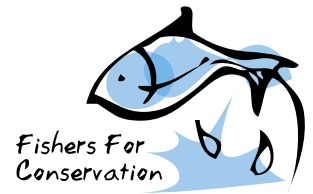


Community based sustainable fishing education project



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Destructive Fishing Practices and Recreational Fishing

What are destructive fishing practices and what can we do about them?

Fishing depends on a healthy environment to provide the conditions for fish to breed and grow. We love our fishing and the last thing most fishers want is to think that they could be negatively impacting on our marine environment and the fish it supports. Unfortunately some fishers don't do the right thing. The good news is that by becoming aware and changing our ways, we can do our bit for the environment and help ensure sustainable fishing for generations to come.

Great fish like this Port River Bream deserve healthy waters and a reduction in toxic pollution, both for their health, and the health of the whole food chain, including humans.



Pollution

Pollution is one of the worst problems facing our marine environment. Don't make things worse by adding to it when you go fishing. Responsible fishers don't spill fuels or other toxic chemicals at sea, or release dirty bilge water into marine, river or estuarine environments. Even biodegradable waste such as old bait or food scraps can cause nutrient pollution in enclosed areas.



Practices such as shark finning are leading to a decline in large fish species around the world. As recreational fishers we need to do what we can to look after our backyard and be a positive voice for change in fishing practices worldwide.

Photo © Ron and Valerie Taylor

Overfishing

Overfishing reduces fish stocks, is greedy and unsustainable. In most cases the bag limits set are more than you can use anyway. Use your common sense and when you have enough (generally a couple of fish each is plenty) move on or head home. It's a great feeling to 'leave them biting' now and again.

Poor fish handling

If fish are to be released it is important to handle them correctly to ensure maximum survival. See FFC Info Sheet #1 *Conserving Your Catch* for more info.

Bycatch

Catching unwanted fish is damaging to the ecosystem. If you are catching a lot of fish that are too small or not a species you want, then it is time to try another tactic or another fishing spot. Good tackle selection and careful fish handling can minimise the damage, but if it's the wrong spot, it's time to move on.

Important fish habitat like inshore reefs face an increasing number of threats. The companion FFC Info Sheet # 4 *Protecting Fish Habitat* gives you information on what you, as a recreational fisher, can do to help.



Tackle choices

Choosing the right tackle can increase your catch and make fishing easier and more fun. Using the wrong kinds of tackle can be damaging to the fish and environment they depend on.

Use appropriate line strength for the fish you are targeting – too light a breaking strain and you risk breaking off and losing line, potentially entangling other aquatic life (not to mention losing the fish you were trying to catch). Alternatively you will exhaust fish with an excessively long fight reducing their chance of survival if they are released.

Choose an appropriate hook size to avoid catching fish that are too small (bigger hook = bigger fish). Use barbless hooks to allow unwanted fish to be easily released (barbs can be filed off or pressed in with pliers).

The use of stainless steel or alloy hooks should be avoided as these hooks can remain in the marine environment and rehook marine life for a lot longer than the conventional alternatives, which rust away. Support the FFC Environmental Statement Regarding Discarded/Lost Fishing Line, Stainless Steel/Alloy Hooks and Fishing by signing the statement received with this information sheet or visiting www.ffc.org.au/Stainless%20Steel%20Hooks.html

Habitat damage

Much of SA's marine habitat is not only unique, it is also fragile. Vulnerable habitats in South Australia include reef, seagrass and mangrove areas. There are a number of ways that we can inadvertently damage these habitats when we are fishing. See FFC Info Sheet # 4 *Protecting Fish Habitat* for more info.

Marine Debris

One of the most destructive things irresponsible fishers can do is pollute the marine environment with litter. Non biodegradable waste like plastic bags, fishing line and cigarette butts can be ingested or entangle marine life with lethal consequences. Never deliberately discard anything from your boat or shore spot. Make sure that everything you take fishing goes back with you. Secure bags etc. so they can't blow away or get washed into the sea by an unexpected wave. Even rubbish discarded on land can often end up in the water and harm or kill marine life.

Damage to marine life

Harming or killing non target fish, birds or mammals is a major problem when fishing. In the past, irresponsible fishers have given fishing a bad name by deliberate acts against species that are thought of as interfering with fishing (e.g. birds and mammals) or the deliberate killing of species considered pests. Unnecessary damage to marine life is cruel and does nothing to help protect our fishing future.

The exception to this rule is declared noxious species such as carp which should be humanely killed and disposed of wisely - never returned to the water.

FFC have prepared a the companion Information Sheet #3 *Recreational Fishing and Marine Mammals* to help you to do the right thing.

Don't leave lines unattended and if a bird or other non target species is in the vicinity remove your line until they have moved on. Use your common sense and avoid damaging our precious marine life.

Pest species

Pest species such as the weed *Caulerpa taxifolia* or the Striped Mussel are a major actual and potential problem for marine environments. Make sure you do not introduce or transplant pest species. Do not use live bait from areas other than the one you are fishing (e.g. goldfish or other domesticated species). Check your tackle, boat and trailer for marine life and do not transfer these between sites. Even microscopic plants and animals can be a problem. Do not transfer them in bait buckets, live wells or bilge water. For more information regarding identifying and reporting pest species, check out the Reef Watch 'Feral or in Peril' program at www.reefwatch.asn.au



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Recreational Fishing Community Grants Programme



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