



# Port Elizabeth Deep Sea Angling Club

*The Conservation Minded Club*

TEL. 041 – 5822701 (Office)  
CELL. 084 284 1046 (Admin)  
FAX. 041 – 582 1546

e-mail: denise@pedsac.co.za  
website: www.pedsac.co.za  
P.O. BOX 5674 - WALMER - PORT ELIZABETH - 6065

## **Newsletter – May 2015.**

April was a very busy month in terms of angling. The Super 6's were finalised and the Tuna Classic came and gone. We will take a look at all that has happened and look at all the club news and announcements from the past month.

### **Scrap Boats / Boat Parking Area**

Pedsac committee members recently met with the Port Engineer and Port Manager and we were once again wrapped on the fingers about the boats that are left un-attended on various parcels of land around Pedsac. They announced that procedures are in place to remove these vessels shortly as soon as they conclude the administrative requirements to do so. Transnet indicated that this applies to scrap boats as well as boats still in use that is being left un-attended for long periods on the parcel of land directly across the road from Pedsac. The club committee requests that members please remove their boats or make alternative arrangements to store the boats in a responsible manner. Pedsac will under no circumstances take responsibility for any boats confiscated by the Port Authorities.

### **Super 6**

I first started fishing the Super 6 league in the 2008 / 2009 season shortly after I joined Pedsac, and I was amazed by the strong angler turn-out and the many boats that always participated.

Since then there was a gradual drop off in participant numbers and boats entered, which can largely be attributed to the economic difficulties placing pressure on many angler's disposable income. Since 2008, many boats were sold or just became in-active, some anglers downscaled to much smaller boats or just simply losing interest in continuing participation for various reasons.

This year's Super 6 series was no different and was recently completed over the last Easter Weekend, marking a new low in the number of entrants and boats participating.

The Super 6 was also troubled by some unfortunate problems, persistent bad weather and a few isolated incidents which contributed to the problem.

We will therefore be looking at ways and measures to rejuvenate and market the Super 6 league to help rekindle interest amongst all our competitive anglers, and those who wish to become involved with this fantastic league.

It is very important for anglers to participate in this league if they want to come into recognition for club representation and ultimately build up the credentials for representing E.P. on national level.

Any suggestion by anglers will be welcomed and can be placed into the suggestion box placed in the foyer at Marlin's Head Bar, or be mailed to our competitions Officer.

### **BLG Logistics Tuna Classic**

The Classic went off very well despite one day being blown out, and no fish caught weighing in over 20kg's. A very positive point is the number of young fish caught weighing between 15 – 20kg's. This is a good indication that the Tuna might be returning to our waters.

The main prizes offered remained unclaimed this year, and negotiations with BLG are underway to carry the main prize over until next year. The Ford Broadbill Night Challenge was also postponed due to the bad weather experienced during the competition and will in all probability be fished during the forthcoming Tuna 1-day competition which will be announced shortly.

We would like to congratulate all the various winners and it is positive to see some new faces vying for top honours.

The Pedsac committee would like to thank all our sponsors who contributed to this year's event. Please find a list of our sponsors at the end of the letter. We ask our members to please support our sponsors in the same manner as they support our club. Events such as the classic will not be possible without their help and financial assistance.

### **Selected E.P. Teams.**

The following Pedsac anglers has been selected for various E.P. Provincial duties.

Tuna Nationals: Martin Gierz Wayne Gerber and Pierrie Westerveldt.

Bottom Nationals team 1: Martin Gierz, Kevin Clark and Wayne Gerber

Bottom Nationals team 2: Richard Donaldson, Peter Dawson, Eugene Van Tonder.

All Coastal's: Richard Donaldson, Christopher Gerber and Peter Dawson.

We would like to congratulate all selected anglers and wish you success with the up-coming competitions.

### **Fish Cleaning Bay.**

Pedsac has provided our anglers with a dedicated fish cleaning station. This was erecting in the far corner bordering the southern boundary inside the club premises.

Please make use of this facility, but please ensure that it is left in a clean state with all blood and guts washed down the drain. Please use the refuse drums provided to discard of any plastics and other bags. Please do not dump any left-over bait, fish heads and guts in the refuse bins.

### **Red Steenbras and Recreational fishing: Missing the bigger picture?**

**Story by Jessica Greenstone**

**Please note!!!** This article is placed in the interest of conservation and may not necessarily entirely share the same view or opinion from Pedsac or that of the average recreational angler. See insert from the Pedsac P.R.O. directly after the article.

There are serious implications to the recent lifting of a moratorium on the recreational fishing of Red Steenbras after a controversial High Court ruling in Gauteng.

In a recent decision, the North Gauteng High Court in Pretoria ruled in favour of a group of recreational fishers (the Border Deep Sea Angling Association) and against the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries that had placed a moratorium on catching Red Steenbras (*Petrus rupestris*) in 2012.

Although the scientific data suggests that the existing stock of Red Steenbras is less than 5% of its historical population, the court concluded that the department had not substantially justified the moratorium.

Red Steenbras is typical of a number of South Africa's endemic line fish species that are severely overexploited. Linefish species are a mixed bag of marine fish that are commonly caught by rod and reel. These species range from near-shore species easily caught by shore anglers (like dusky Kob) to fish nomads like Snoek and yellowtail that roam the coastal oceans freely.

The groups of fishers that target these line fish are equally diverse. Of the three recognised sectors of fishers that target line fish stocks, the recreational sector is the least understood and the most rapidly growing.

Recreational fishers are those who fish for sport. As such, they are not constrained by the economics that may prevent overfishing in the commercial linefish sector where the fishers fish for their livelihoods. Recreational fishers are likely to go fishing even if they are unable to catch many fish due to low population sizes because they are there for the love of it, not the money.

The impacts on line fish stocks by this growing recreational sector are poorly quantified. They are, however, universally recognised by scientists as substantial due to the large recreational fleet size and the financial resources of the average recreational angler.

While there are no well-defined figures on the size of the boat-based recreational fleet in South Africa, it is at least larger than the membership of the South African Deep Sea Angling Association, which represents the interests of approximately 9,000 deep sea anglers and approximately 1,200 vessels (notably, the commercial line fish sector is limited to 450 vessels presently).

The court's decision highlights the gap in present management efforts to understand the impacts of the recreational sector on critical line fish stocks like Red Steenbras and the gaps in the department's communication with this important group of stakeholders. The department does not presently mandate catch returns for recreational fishers and there are few limits on their catches. The department can and should do better to fulfil this mandate.

But the court's heavy-handed decision to lift the moratorium on the recreational sector missed the big picture. The decision also set a very troubling legal precedent in the process.

There is no dispute under any interpretation of existing scientific data that Red Steenbras is in serious ecological trouble. As of 2002, it was found to be at less than 5% of its historical population. The department tried other measures before instituting the disputed 2012 moratorium.

In 2000, it declared a "state of emergency" and reduced the commercial line-fishing effort by approximately 70%. Since 2005, there has been a catch limit of [one](#) Red Steenbras per fisher per day for both the recreational and commercial fishing sectors. Nevertheless, catches of Red Steenbras have continued to decline across most of its range and the species has all but disappeared in some areas.

In 2010, departmental scientists recommended a total ban on fishing of the species. Since the severe cuts made to the commercial effort in 2000 and the further limitations imposed in 2005 did not improve the situation, it stands to reason that more aggressive action was necessary.

The court ruled against the department and the recommendation of its fishery scientists on the basis of a hunch that a small group of recreational fishers did not meaningfully impact the Red Steenbras population.

This decision ignored the basic principles of fisheries science in the process and the collective work of experts who have spent decades understanding the dynamics of South Africa's fisheries. It also ignored the precautionary principle of fisheries management that is enshrined in South African law, which encourages protective action before there is complete scientific proof of harm. This principle is necessary to protect marine species as there is often incomplete information about the resource until it is too late.

The court also fundamentally overlooked that to a Red Steenbras and a fisheries scientist, both a commercial fisher and a recreational fisher result in dead fish and the actions of both need restriction. This is particularly the case for Red Steenbras, which is a popular recreational "trophy" fish. A good fisher knows where to find Red Steenbras whether there be a million of them in the sea or just a handful left.

The greatest concern is the worrying precedent that this case may set if not overturned. The business of managing fisheries is a messy one. In order to recover and maintain vulnerable stocks, it is necessary for the department to exclude some users from the resource. Now, such disgruntled fishers may be emboldened to try their luck in court.

What does this mean for the multitude of imperilled line fish stocks that the department has sought to protect through Marine Protected Areas, moratoriums and other unpopular, but necessary, management tools?

This decision should be challenged and the department should immediately get on with the business of balancing the interests of all South Africans and making the hard but necessary choices to protect South Africa's marine heritage.

The department, in turn, should heed the lesson from this case urgently to take steps to monitor the impacts of recreational fishing and to open up a dialogue with these fishers to work collaboratively to manage the impacts and interests of this important fishing sector.

## **Note from P.R.O officer.**

I recently fished in the All-Coastal's Inter-Provincial competition hosted by the Kwelerha Ski-Boat Club, situated barely a stone's throw up the coast from East London. I was also fortunate to represent Pedsac and Eastern Province in various competitions in the Border area over the past 4 years and can therefore shed some light from my experiences fishing for Red Steenbras and what I have noticed over this period of time.

The recent Inter-Provincial competition showed just how few large Copper's are caught with most of the fish caught today weighing in between 8-15 kg. Only one copper came to the scales weighing in at 22kg last weekend. Although the weather was not favourable and probably had an impact on the catches, I still managed to discuss this matter with few Border lads off the record, and who agrees that the bigger fish are still scarce, even after the 3-year total ban that was recently lifted after Border Deep Sea Angling fought tooth and nail to have this ban turned over. This is in stark contrast to the 2012 Gonubie inter-club I fished shortly before the Red Steenbras was completely banned, when many fish weighing in between 20-30 kg's made it to the scales in a single day.

On the positive side, is the increase in young Red Steenbras that are caught down here in P.E. and other places down towards the Western Cape where Copper's were previously thought to be caught out, and can directly be attributed to the total ban. I am under no circumstances saying that the lifting of the ban was done to the detriment of the Red Steenbras, neither am I in full agreement with the article as posted above, but merely highlighting the plight our valuable slow-growing fish species are currently facing.

Poaching of copper's was, and still happens to be rife and continuing to be a huge problem in the Border and Transkei area. This poaching continued mostly unabated during the total ban between 2012 and 2014, partially due the remoteness of some areas which is extremely difficult to control and police effectively.

Larger Red Steenbras are also caught in depths ranging between 80m to 100m and always suffer from barotrauma when hauled up from these great depths. They rarely survive being released back when caught accidentally or returned by catch and release anglers, even when done with a proper release kit helping to pull the fish down to deeper water to help equalise and when done with utmost care. This all just adds to the problem as mortality after release often exceeds that of fish kept by responsible anglers.

While fishing up in Kwelerha this past weekend, I was informed by the Border Deep Sea Angling Association President (Tyrone Gower) that the Department of Environmental Affairs (and not DAF) are launching a new bid to re-institute the total closure (a new angle from an environmental side, and not a conservation side) and we as anglers will have to show the utmost respect and constraint when fishing for these monsters from the deep if we wish for there to be any chance of the current status quo to be maintained so that we will be able to catch a Copper every once in a while for many years to come.

## **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.