

SYDNEY HARBOUR TOP SPOT: FISHING SURVEY

A comprehensive survey of recreational fishers in Sydney Harbour has found the estuary is not only the most popular fishing spot in the State, but also has the highest number of fish caught per square kilometre of any NSW waterway.

Primary Industries Minister, Steve Whan, said more than 500 fishers were interviewed for the survey and that the vast majority were impressed with the quality and quantity of fish in the harbour.

“Given the easy access to Sydney Harbour, the large human population that surrounds it and the healthy fish stocks, it’s no wonder Sydney Harbour is a popular place to drop a line,” Minister Whan said.

“The survey asked fishers to rate the harbour with respect to the number, size and variety of fish available, and more than 70 per cent rated the fishery as good to very good.

“It found that more than 300,000 hours of fishing was done in the harbour during the three months of summer 2008 and fishers caught more than 32 different species of fish.

“The results show that Sydney Harbour is clearly a thriving, world class fishery that is enjoyed by many fishers on a regular basis.”

The most popular fish species caught and kept were:

- Yellowtail scad, yellowfin bream, snapper, tailor, dusky flathead, kingfish, trumpeter whiting, slimy mackerel, sand whiting and yellow-finned leatherjacket.

The survey covered the area west of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, including



Enjoys fishing but would never eat fish caught in the harbour... Colin Li at Walsh Bay. Photo: Jacky Ghossein

the Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers and the east of the Bridge, including North and Middle Harbours.

Mr Whan said it was disappointing to find that some fishers were choosing to ignore food safety guidelines on keeping fish caught west of the Harbour Bridge and a number of fishers were also found to be keeping undersize fish.

“Despite the well publicised warnings that seafood from this area should not be consumed, the survey found a large number of fish were caught and retained west of the bridge,” Minister Whan said.

“Widespread warnings have been in place since 2006 when high levels of dioxin were detected in some fish species.”

Minister Whan said that when com-

mercial fishing was banned in 2006 an expert panel advised the Government that people could continue to eat fish from Sydney Harbour and Parramatta River providing they follow strict dietary advice.

“However, no seafood caught west of the Sydney Harbour Bridge should be eaten,” Mr Whan said.

“And generally no more than 150 grams per month of seafood caught east of the Sydney Harbour Bridge should be consumed,” he said.

Mr Whan said he urged everyone to enjoy the fantastic variety of fishing opportunities that the Harbour has to offer, but that they had to abide by the rules.

“Anglers should follow the dietary

advice, obey fishing regulations and release any undersize fish back to the water,” he said.

“These guidelines are in place for the health of fisherman and the health of the harbour fishery.

“Those that don’t toe the line can face significant fines.”

Sydney Harbour survey results:

- The Sydney Harbour estuary has the highest density of recreational fishing effort and harvest per square kilometre compared to other NSW estuaries such as Lake Macquarie and Tross Lake.

- 62 per cent of harbour fishing is shore-based and 38 per cent boat-based.

- About 300 000 hours of fishing effort were expended in the Sydney Harbour estuary over the 3-month survey period

- 96 per cent of fishers were found to be residents of the suburbs of Sydney

- About 74 tonnes of finfish, crabs and cephalopods were caught

- About 225 000 finfish, crabs and cephalopods were kept and another 293 000 individuals were caught and released

- More than 70% of the fishers rated the quality of the recreational fishery as ‘good’

- There were 33 different species of fish caught and kept during the survey period

- The ten species most commonly caught and kept were yellowtail scad, yellowfin bream, snapper, tailor, dusky flathead, kingfish, trumpeter whiting, slimy mackerel, sand whiting and yellow-finned leatherjacket.

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