



## FACT SHEET

### SEVENTY-FOUR

*Polysteganus undulosus*

**Family:** Sparidae

**Other common names:** Seventy-four seabream, Vier-en-sewentig

<b>Description</b>	A moderately elongate fish that has a rounded head profile. The overall body colour is pinkish-red above and white below. There are 4-6 horizontal, iridescent blue lines along the flanks. A conspicuous and characteristic black mark lies across the lateral line, immediately below the 5th and 6th dorsal fin spines.
<b>Distribution</b>	Endemic to the south-eastern seaboard of southern Africa from Cape Point to the mouth of the Limpopo River in southern Mozambique. Through overfishing the former range of seventy-four has contracted to the area between Sodwana Bay and the central Agulhas Bank, with the centre of adult distribution being deep offshore reefs between Durban and East London.
<b>Habitat</b>	They frequent deep offshore reefs (40-160 m), often forming dense shoals. Often found in association with ledges and pinnacles.
<b>Feeding</b>	Primarily piscivorous, feeding on pelagic fish species such as sardines and mackerel but their diet also includes small reef fish, cephalopods and crustaceans.
<b>Movement</b>	While juveniles appear to be fairly resident, adults undertake an annual migration from the Cape into Transkei and southern KwaZulu-Natal waters during winter to spawn. This migration could also be in response to the seasonal migration of sardines, which form one of their main prey. There is a possibility of a return migration of adults to the Cape after spawning but this has not been confirmed.
<b>Reproduction</b>	They reach maturity at about 65-75 cm total length at an age of about 8-9 years. Spawning occurs during late winter to spring (July-November), peaking in August-October. Spawning takes place over offshore reefs in 50-100 m depth off the KwaZulu-Natal and northern Transkei coast. The Illovo Banks just south of Amanzimtoti on the KwaZulu-Natal south coast was a well known spawning aggregation site that was heavily fished by lineboats operating out of Durban Harbour after the 2nd World War.

## Age and growth

They can reach a maximum size of 100 cm total length and a weight of 16 Kg. They have been aged up to 20 years, but are likely to live much longer.

## Current status

The stock of seventy-four collapsed in the 1960s and the spawner biomass was estimated to be at less than 5% of its pristine level prior to the closure of the fishery in 1998. There is evidence that the stock has subsequently been rebuilding, but poaching is hampering this recovery. They have been evaluated as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List (2014). South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) List: Red.



## Capture

Throughout the 20th Century seventy-four was intensively targeted by commercial and recreational line-fishing vessels (firstly by line-boats and later by ski-boats), especially on their spawning grounds in southern KwaZulu-Natal. By the late 1960s the fishery in KwaZulu-Natal, which was made up predominantly of large adult fish, had collapsed and only small quantities continued to be caught in the Eastern Cape. Catches in the southeastern and southern Cape also declined considerably. A stock assessment conducted in 1996, based on historical data collected during 1962-63, showed that stocks had already collapsed by the 1960s. Based on this evidence and the fact that catch per unit effort had declined by more than 90% throughout its distribution, a moratorium was placed on catching seventy-four in 1998 to allow stock rebuilding to take place. A reassessment of the seventy-four stock conducted in 2007, 10 years after the implementation of the moratorium, showed little evidence of recovery of the adult spawning population in KwaZulu-Natal, except a slight increase in mean size of adult fish. There was however, evidence of increasing numbers of juveniles in the Eastern Cape suggesting that stock rebuilding is slowly taking place.

## Current recreational fishing regulations

**Daily bag limit:** Zero  
**Minimum size limit:** Not applicable  
**Closed Season:** Not applicable  
**Other regulations:** Prohibited Species  
**Marine protected areas (MPAs):** It is likely that the Dwesa-Cwebe, Amathole and Addo MPAs currently play an important role in providing protection for resident juveniles. The Pondoland, Protea Bank and Aliwal Shoal MPAs will likely play a role in the protection of adults. In particular, the northern extension of the Aliwal Shoal MPA to include part of the Illovo Banks will hopefully assist in protecting spawning aggregations of this species.

## Reference

Information from the ORI Fish App. [www.saambr.org.za](http://www.saambr.org.za)



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