



FACT SHEET

BLUE EMPEROR

Lethrinus nebulosus

Family: Lethrinidae

Other common names: Spangled emperor, Mata-hari, Scavenger, Blou keiser

Description

This species has a long, sloping forehead and a pointed snout. The olive-green upper body fades to white underneath. Each scale has a blueish centre and there are blue lines radiating out from the eyes. The inside of the mouth is red in colour. Upper and lower margins of the caudal fin are red.

Distribution

Indo-West Pacific region from South Africa to Japan, including Australian waters. Their southern limit in South African waters is only confirmed to Durban. Specimens recorded south of this (reported to extend to Algoa Bay) are likely to be *Lethrinus scoparius* which is similar in appearance but is a smaller species.

Habitat

Adults occur alone or in small shoals on coral and rocky reefs from 10 m down to 80 m, often found on sand between reefs and over the reef itself. Juveniles form large schools in shallow, sheltered sandy areas, including seagrass and mangrove areas.

Feeding

They feed on a range of organisms including echinoderms, molluscs, crustaceans, polychaete worms and small fishes.

Movement

Adults possibly migrate to shallow reef areas for spawning and likely move to deeper waters with age. Limited tag-recapture data suggests a high degree of residency.

Reproduction

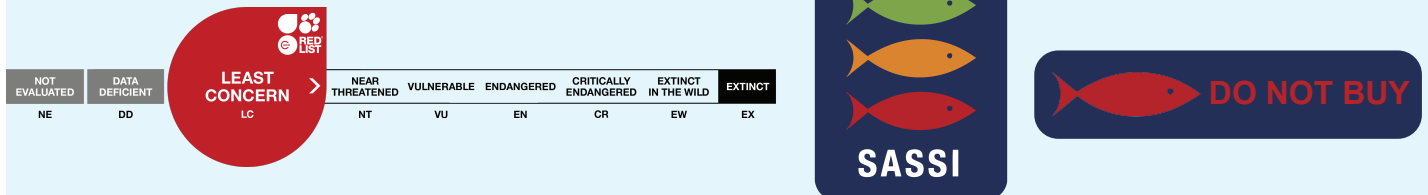
They reach maturity at a length of 28-46 cm and an age of 3-9 years depending on locality. They appear to spawn all year round in shallow reef areas in tropical waters.

Age and growth

They can reach a maximum size of 87 cm total length and a weight of 9.4 kg. They have been aged up to 27 years.

Current status

Little is known about the status of this species in South African waters. It has been evaluated as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List (2015)
South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) List: Red.



Capture

Given the recent realization that blue emperor (*L. nebulosus*) is only found as far south as northern KwaZulu-Natal, it is probable that this species only makes a very small contribution to recreational and commercial ski-boat catches in the province. It is also occasionally caught by shore anglers north of Sodwana Bay and in Mozambique. Previous reports of the species in South African waters south of Richards Bay are primarily referring to the as-yet undescribed *Lethrinus scoparius*.

Current recreational fishing regulations

Daily bag limit: 10 per person per day
Minimum size limit: None
Closed Season: None
Other regulations: None
Marine protected areas (MPAs): This species receives protection in the iSimangaliso MPA where no bottom fishing is allowed.

Reference

Information from the ORI Fish App. www.saambr.org.za



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