



Juvenile



Adult

FACT SHEET

Natal Knifejaw

Oplegnathus robinsoni

Family: Oplegnathidae

Other common names: Cuckoo bass, Natalse kraaibek

Description

Deep bodied with a high second dorsal fin and a parrot-like beak. Body is overall grey-brown to dark brown in colour and may be mottled. Juveniles are bright yellow with several vertical black bars along the body from eye to tail.

Distribution

Endemic, known mainly from southern Mozambique and KwaZulu-Natal waters but common in the Pondoland MPA in the Eastern Cape and juveniles seen as far south as Tsitsikamma. The Mozambique knifejaw (*Oplegnathus pealopesi*) may simply be a large Natal knifejaw.

Habitat

Adults are found on inshore coral and rocky reefs in depths of 10-100 m. Small yellow and black juveniles are pelagic in currents, commonly found under floating objects at sea, while slightly larger juveniles are found on shallow subtidal reefs.

Feeding

Diet includes ascidians, soft corals and other reef-encrusting organisms.

Movement

Little known, thought to be a resident species.

Reproduction	They reach maturity after 36 cm fork length. Spawning takes place in summer (October to January) and is thought to occur throughout their distribution range.
Age and growth	They can reach a maximum size of 60 cm total length and a weight of 3 kg. They have been aged to a maximum of 10 years.
Current status	The Natal knifejaw stock has not been assessed and little is known about their current status. However, long-term records of a single competitive spearfisher indicate significant decline in catch per unit effort recorded off Ballito and Scottburgh on the KwaZulu-Natal coast between 1989-97 and 2002-07 despite a predicted increase for tropical species due to climate change and increased water temperature. They have not been evaluated on the IUCN Red List. South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) List: Red.
	  
Capture	This is an important target species for spearfishers in KwaZulu-Natal. They are occasionally (but rarely) taken on line.
Current recreational fishing regulations	<p>Daily bag limit: 5 per person per day</p> <p>Minimum size limit: None</p> <p>Closed Season: None</p> <p>Other regulations: No sale recreational species</p> <p>Marine protected areas (MPAs): They are likely to receive protection within no-take MPAs having suitable reef habitat along the southern Mozambique, KwaZulu-Natal and Pondoland coast.</p>
Reference	Information from the ORI Fish App. www.saambr.org.za



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