

## FACT SHEET

### BLACK MUSSELCRACKER

*Cymatoceps nasutus*

**Family:** Sparidae

**Other common names:** Poenskop, Black steenbras, Blou biskop

#### Description

A deep-bodied, robust fish with large adult fish developing a fleshy white snout. Overall colour is dark grey to black. Adolescents are lighter in colour and have two or more dark crossbars and scattered white blotches. Small juveniles are greenish brown in colour and covered with white blotches.

#### Distribution

Endemic to southern Africa, found from Cape Agulhas to Ponto do Ouro in southern Mozambique.

#### Habitat

Adults are found on high-profile inshore and offshore reefs down to depths of at least 100 m, while juveniles are found in the rocky surf-zone and on shallow subtidal reefs.

#### Feeding

They feed on a variety of prey including molluscs, crustaceans and echinoderms. Their powerful conical teeth are used to crush hard-shelled invertebrates.

#### Movement

Juveniles are highly resident in the Eastern and Western Cape. Some adults undertake a uni-directional movement up the east coast to Transkei and KwaZulu-Natal waters, presumably to spawn.

## Reproduction

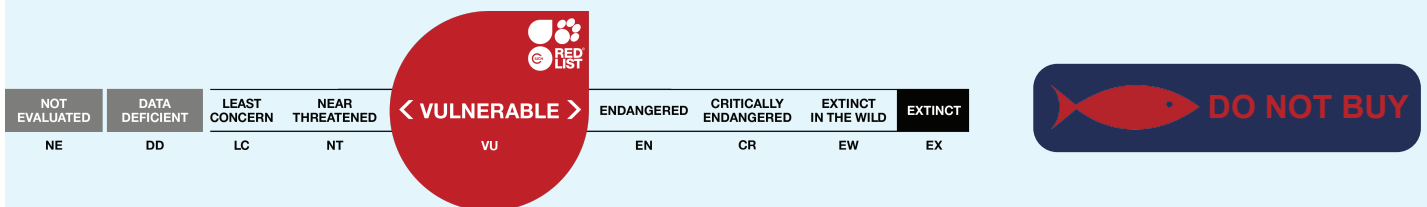
Females mature at about 53 cm fork length and an age of about 10 years. Black musselcracker change sex at about 70 cm fork length (about 18 years old) with all fish greater than 95 cm fork length being males. Spawning takes place from May to October in Transkei and KwaZulu-Natal waters.

## Age and growth

They can reach a maximum size of 110 cm fork length and a weight of 37.8 kg and have been aged up to a maximum of 45 years. They are the second largest of the sparid species and one of the slowest growing.

## Current status

Although not assessed, it is estimated that black musselcracker have declined to approximately 20% of their historical abundance. They have been evaluated as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List. South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) List: Red.



## Capture

Caught by shore anglers, spearfishers, recreational and commercial ski-boat fishers throughout their distribution. Sought after by recreational fishers because of their powerful and dogged fighting ability. Will take a range of baits but are particularly partial to rock lobster tails and small reef fish.

## Current recreational fishing regulations

**Daily bag limit:** 1 per person per day  
**Minimum size limit:** 50 cm total length  
**Closed Season:** None  
**Other regulations:** None  
**Marine protected areas (MPAs):** The residency of juveniles and adults suggest that well enforced, no-take MPAs with suitable reef habitat are extremely important for the conservation of this species throughout their distribution.

## Reference

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



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