



Media Statement

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New research debunks crab flush myth

NEW research assisted by Peel locals has debunked the myth that winter rains sweep infant crabs out into the Indian Ocean.

The research, presented by the Department of Fisheries at a public lecture at the Peel Waterways Centre recently, is part of a \$300,000 three-year study into the Peel crab fishery.

Researchers say a strong community response to a survey on recreational fishing is helping them to build a better understanding of blue swimmer crab stocks in the Peel - Harvey estuary.

“Traditionally, the commercial catch decreases over the winter months as most legal size crabs are flushed out of the estuary following winter rains.” Department of Fisheries Researcher David Harris said at the lecture.

“But with our smaller mesh pots, we caught large numbers of crabs the whole way through the winter months, although they were virtually all undersize.

“This seems at odds with one commonly held idea that come the rains, all of the crabs are flushed out of the estuary. This year at least, the recruits (small crabs) remained,” he said.

The researchers have used data from commercial operators, along with their own research to measure changes in the crab population.

Mr Harris said that while the study was only one year into the program, the data collected so far had already shown some interesting results.

He said efforts were also being made to monitor the recreational take of crabs.

“The recreational survey is very comprehensive. We’ve tried to cover every aspect of recreational crabbing in the estuary,” he said.

“The response from the public has been great and this should help to produce a more reliable result.”

“It has the potential to provide us with a much better understanding of the recreational component of the Peel - Harvey crab fishery.”

Peel Waterways Centre Manager Bob Pond said he was not surprised to hear the public was backing the research project so strongly.



Department of Water
Government of Western Australia

“Just looking at the number of people who attended this lecture you get an idea of the level of interest from the public,” Mr Pond said.

“We had people standing outside the room it was so packed. The locals are really passionate about crabs and that’s a great sign that as a community we’re ready to do whatever it takes, to ensure the sustainability of our crab population.”

Mr Pond said the next lecture on June 25 would feature the *Leave No Trace* organisation talking about on minimising the impact of outdoor recreation on the natural environment.

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