

Dear fishing enthusiast,

I am conducting a three-year research project on the biology and movements of mangrove jack in NSW. The research is funded by Southern Cross University and the NSW Saltwater Recreational Fishing Trust (your license fees).

Some aspects of this research require samples from dead mangrove jack. In particular, counting growth rings on otoliths ('ear bones') enables us to determine fish age, while stomach contents and reproductive organs also provide important insights into the species' biology. Frames collected last season have already provided some interesting results. One large jack was more than fifty years old, while stomach contents included a diverse array of prey types ranging from fairly large fish through to tiny shrimp.

In order to avoid killing fish specifically for the research, I have been seeking donations of mangrove jack frames (filleted skeletons with head and guts intact) from anglers and spear fishers. I'm definitely not asking anyone to kill a mangrove jack they would otherwise want to release, but if you decide to keep one, the frame would be very valuable for my research. If you donate a frame, I am happy to contact you and let you know how old your fish was (as well as any other interesting finds such as stomach contents or stage of reproductive development).

If you would like to donate a frame, just fillet the fish (please leave head and guts intact), put the frame in a plastic bag (an ordinary shopping bag is fine) and put it in the freezer. Then contact me using the details below, and I will arrange to collect the fish at a time and place convenient for you. Everyone who donates a frame will be eligible to win a 'mangrove jack research' t-shirt.

This research covers the entire NSW coastline, so it's very important that I collect frames from as many areas as possible. Every single fish will provide valuable data.

Thank you for any assistance you may be able to provide.

Yours sincerely,

Toby Piddocke

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