



# TASMANIAN BANDED MORWONG FISHERY ASSESSMENT 2020/21

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This assessment of the Tasmanian Banded Morwong Fishery is produced by the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), using data downloaded from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) Tasmania's Fisheries Integrated Licensing and Management System (FILMS) database. The information presented here includes all logbook returns up until March 2021.

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# Contents

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Commercial fishery.....	1
Recreational fishery.....	6
<b>2. Methods .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Data sources .....	7
Commercial fishery data.....	7
Data analysis .....	8
Biological characteristics.....	8
Catch and Effort .....	9
Catch per unit effort.....	9
Stock modelling .....	10
Assessment of stock status.....	13
Stock status definitions.....	13
Performance indicators and reference points.....	13
<b>3. Results.....</b>	<b>15</b>
Biological characteristics.....	15
Length frequency composition .....	15
Age frequency composition .....	18
Growth rates.....	21
Length at female maturity.....	22
Catch, effort and catch rates.....	24
Selected stock modelling results and stock status .....	26
<b>4. By-product and protected species interactions .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Appendix A .....</b>	<b>35</b>

# Executive Summary

## STOCK STATUS

## SUSTAINABLE

Spawning stock biomass (SSB) of Banded Morwong was estimated to be at 42% of initial SSB. Forward projections of the stock assessment model revealed a high confidence (90% probability) that SSB will remain at 38% of initial SSB over the next five years, thereby exceeding the agreed limit reference point of 30% of initial SSB for this period. The above estimates indicate that the biomass of Banded Morwong is unlikely to be depleted and that the current level of fishing mortality is unlikely to cause the stock to become recruitment impaired. However, a review of the stock assessment model highlighted important sensitivities in predicted SSB that should be addressed through targeted research for increased confidence in future assessments.

This assessment of the Tasmanian Banded Morwong Fishery covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020 to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021. The assessment examines trends in biological characteristics, catch, effort and standardised catch per unit effort (CPUE), and forecasts biomass levels under current management arrangements.

In Tasmania, Banded Morwong are commercially harvested by a small-scale coastal gillnet fishery. Prior to 1990, the species had little commercial value. In the early 1990s, a targeted fishery for Banded Morwong started to supply domestic live fish markets. All holders of a Tasmanian Fishing Boat Licence were able to take Banded Morwong and, as a result, there was a dramatic increase in effort directed at the species, with reported catches peaking at 145 t in 1993/94. Catches fell dramatically in the late 1990s, with 34.6 t landed in 1999/2000.

A quota management system with a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) was introduced in late 2008 to regulate fishing mortality at key fishing grounds on the east coast. The TAC has undergone a staged reduction from 38.8 t in 2012/13 to 31 t in 2017/18. The TAC has remained at 31 t for the last four fishing seasons. In addition, a temporal closure is in place for 1<sup>st</sup> March to 30<sup>th</sup> April each year, encompassing the species' peak spawning period. The species is subject to keyhole size limits, which are currently set at a minimum legal size of 360 mm and a maximum legal size of 460 mm.

A sampling program commenced in 1995 to obtain biological information, in particular size and age compositions, to better inform Banded Morwong assessments. Truncations in length and age compositions have been observed over the course of this sampling program, particularly for female fish. In recent years, age compositions appear to have stabilised but remain at levels much lower than when surveys began. Old fish (> 20 years) are rarely observed, and relative proportions of fish < 8 years old have increased. Changes in mean length at age of individuals aged between 2–10 years, and fluctuations in length at maturity, have also been observed.

State-wide catch in 2020/21 was estimated at 25.0 t. The total catch in the TAC area was 23.6 t (3.2 t from the north-east coast (Area 1), 7.1 t from the east coast (Area 2) and 13.3 t from the south-east coast (Area 3)), which represented 76.1% of the 2020/21 TAC (i.e., a TAC under-catch of 23.9%). The unusually high under-catch was due to the deflated market condition during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020/21. The total catch outside of the TAC area was 1.4 t. State-wide effort, in terms of both days fished and gear units (100 m net hour), decreased due primarily to decreased effort in Areas 1 and 2. Catch in these areas decreased as well while standardised catch per unit effort (CPUE) in the TAC area increased by 13% relative to 2019/20.

A review of the assessment model highlighted the influence of the different data sources on the model results. It also highlighted multiple sensitivities in spawning stock biomass (SSB) predictions that can be addressed through targeted research for more robust assessments in the future. Based on the current model, SSB was estimated at 42% of initial SSB (38% at the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile) in 2025, with the current harvest strategy (i.e., 26 kg / quota unit and a TAC of 31 t in the future, with the exception of 30 kg / quota unit and a TAC of 35.8 t in 2021/22) thus maintaining

SSB above the limit reference point of 30% of initial SSB. Under more conservative structural assumptions about population sizes and exchange between shallow fished areas and deeper unfished areas, predicted SSB was reduced to 31% (27% at the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile). The current model estimates exceeded the agreed limit reference point of 30%, indicating that the biomass of Banded Morwong in Tasmanian waters is unlikely to be depleted and that the current level of fishing mortality is unlikely to cause the stock to become recruitment impaired. Banded Morwong in Tasmanian waters is thus classified as a sustainable stock.

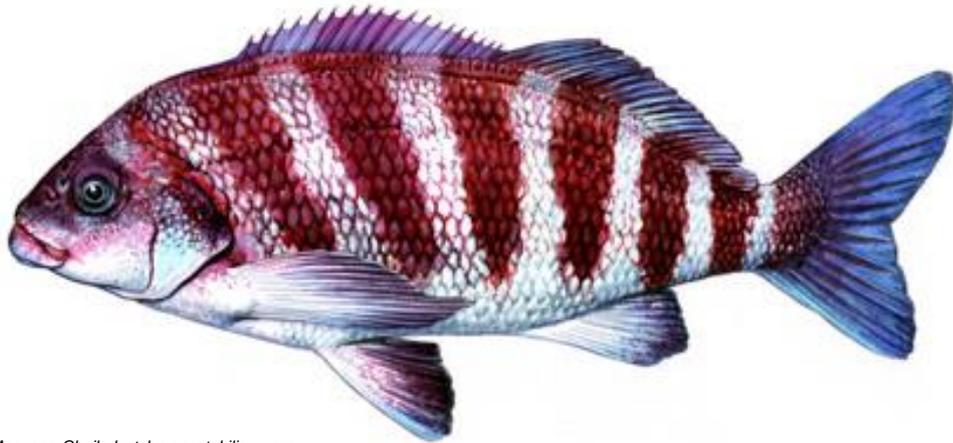
# Acknowledgements

This assessment was funded by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) Tasmania and the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), University of Tasmania, through the Sustainable Marine Research Collaboration Agreement (SMRCA). Graeme Ewing (IMAS) provided the biological sampling data.

# 1. Introduction

## Species biology

Banded Morwong (*Cheilodactylus spectabilis*; Figure 1) is a large, sedentary fish that inhabits temperate reefs around south-eastern Australia and New Zealand (Gomon et al 1994). In Australia, the species distribution extends from Sydney, through Victorian and Tasmanian waters, to eastern South Australia. The species has occasionally been observed in Western Australia. Banded Morwong are long-lived, and can reach ages of at least 97 years (Ewing et al. 2007). While longevity is similar among sexes, the species displays strong sexual dimorphism in growth, with males growing substantially faster and reaching larger maximum sizes than females (Ziegler et al. 2007a).



Banded Morwong *Cheilodactylus spectabilis*  
Source: NRE (by Peter Gouldthorpe)

**Figure 1.** Banded Morwong, *Cheilodactylus spectabilis*.

The stock structure of Banded Morwong in Australian waters is presently undefined, however observations of a long pelagic larval stage (around 6 months; Wolf 1998) suggests that single genetic stocks may occur over large areas. After settlement, fish are relatively sedentary, with tagging studies indicating little exchange among reefs (Murphy and Lyle 1999) (see Table 1 for a summary of species biology).

## Commercial fishery

In Tasmania, Banded Morwong are commercially harvested by a small-scale coastal gillnet fishery. Prior to 1990, the species had little commercial value apart from use as bait by rock lobster fishers (Ziegler et al. 2007a). In the early 1990s a targeted fishery for Banded Morwong started to supply domestic live fish markets, primarily in Sydney and Melbourne. All holders of a Tasmanian Fishing Boat Licence were able to take this species and, as a result, there was a dramatic increase in effort directed at the species, with reported catches peaking at 145 t in 1993/94. Catches fell dramatically in the late 1990s, with 34.6 t landed in 1999/00.

**Table 1.** Biology of Banded Morwong, *Cheilodactylus spectabilis*.

Parameters	Estimates	Reference																		
Habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rocky reefs down to 50 m depth. Females and juveniles inhabit the shallow section of the reef while males dominate in the deeper section of the reef.</li> </ul>	McCormick (1989a, b)																		
Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>South Sydney (New South Wales) through Victoria and Tasmania to eastern South Australia, also in New Zealand.</li> </ul>	Gomon et al. (1994)																		
Diet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invertebrates, algae, crabs.</li> </ul>	McCormick (1998)																		
Movement and stock structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited movement of juveniles and adults, generally restricted to within 5 km of the release site.</li> <li>No information on the stock structure.</li> </ul>	Murphy and Lyle (1999) Ziegler et al. (2006) Buxton et al. (2010)																		
Natural mortality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low. Estimated at <math>M = 0.05</math>.</li> </ul>	Murphy and Lyle (1999)																		
Maximum age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Females: 94 years</li> <li>Males: 97 years</li> </ul>	Ewing et al. (2007)																		
Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Males grow to larger sizes than females</li> <li>Growth described by the Schnute and Richards (1990) growth function:  <math display="block">L = L_{\infty}(1 + \alpha e^{-at^c})^{-\frac{1}{b}}</math>                     where <math>L</math> is the length (mm), <math>t</math> is the age (years), <math>L_{\infty}</math> is the average maximum length for the species and <math>\alpha</math>, <math>a</math>, <math>b</math> and <math>c</math> are (year-specific) constants.                 </li> <li>Parameters estimates (for 2007) are:</li> </ul> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Sex</th> <th><math>L_{\infty}</math></th> <th><math>a</math></th> <th><math>b</math></th> <th><math>c</math></th> <th><math>\alpha</math></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Female</td> <td>442</td> <td>18.8</td> <td><math>3.3e^{-7}</math></td> <td>0.05</td> <td>51.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Males</td> <td>516</td> <td>2.3</td> <td>0.0088</td> <td>0.33</td> <td>0.1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Length-weight relationship for 2007 was estimated at <math>W = 3.563E^{-5}L^{2.875}</math> for females and <math>W = 3.729E^{-5}L^{2.852}</math> for males, where <math>W</math> is weight (g) and <math>L</math> is the fork length (cm).</li> </ul>	Sex	$L_{\infty}$	$a$	$b$	$c$	$\alpha$	Female	442	18.8	$3.3e^{-7}$	0.05	51.4	Males	516	2.3	0.0088	0.33	0.1	Schnute and Richards (1990) Ziegler et al. (2007a)
Sex	$L_{\infty}$	$a$	$b$	$c$	$\alpha$															
Female	442	18.8	$3.3e^{-7}$	0.05	51.4															
Males	516	2.3	0.0088	0.33	0.1															
Maturity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Size-at-50% maturity estimated at 320 mm for females (~2.5 years of age).</li> </ul>	Ziegler et al. (2007a)																		
Spawning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spawning occurs between mid-February to late May.</li> <li>Species is a serial spawner.</li> </ul>	Murphy and Lyle (1999)																		
Early life history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eggs and larvae are concentrated on the surface.</li> <li>Banded Morwong has a pelagic larval stage that is distributed offshore, as suggested by the large amounts of larvae caught off the shelf break of eastern Tasmania.</li> <li>Juveniles appear in shallow water on rocky reefs and tide-pools between September and December, after a pelagic phase of 4-6 months.</li> </ul>	B. Bruce, pers. comm. Wolf (1998)																		
Gillnet post release survival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High: 97% irrespective of gillnet soak duration</li> </ul>	Lyle et al. (2014a)																		

Banded Morwong are currently targeted almost exclusively for the live fish market with large mesh gillnets, primarily of 130–140 mm stretched mesh. The fishery is centred mainly along the east coast of Tasmania, between St. Helens in the north and the Tasman Peninsula in the south, with the largest catches traditionally coming from around Bicheno. Smaller catches have been taken along the south coast and around Flinders Island. While Banded Morwong inhabit depths down to at least 50 m (May and Maxwell 1986), fishing operations are conducted over inshore reefs, with gear set primarily in the 5–20 m depth range, in order to minimise effects of barotrauma and maximise survival for the live fish trade.

The Banded Morwong Fishery in Tasmania is managed using a combination of input and output controls (Table 2). The fishery has undergone numerous management changes over time (summarised in Table 3). The commercial fishery in Tasmania is currently managed as two areas: an area in which individual transferable quotas are used to limit a total allowable catch (TAC; the TAC area), and an area in which it does not (the non-TAC area) (Figure 2). In order to fish for Banded Morwong within the TAC area a person must hold a fishing licence (Banded Morwong) which has uncaught quota units authorised on it. There is no quota management outside the TAC area and any holders of a fishing licence (Banded Morwong) can fish in this region with or without quota authorised to their licence. A temporal closure is in place for 1<sup>st</sup> March to 30<sup>th</sup> April in each year, encompassing the species’ peak spawning period. The species is subject to keyhole size limits, which are currently set at a minimum legal size of 360 mm fork length (FL) and a maximum legal size of 460 mm FL. A bag limit of two fish and a possession limit of four fish is in place for recreational fishers. For management and assessment purposes, a limit reference point has been implemented whereby a spawning stock biomass (SSB) of 30% that of initial spawning stock biomass (SSB<sub>0</sub>) must be exceeded in five years (2025) with a 90% probability.

**Table 2.** Summary of management controls for Banded Morwong in Tasmanian waters.

<b>FISHING METHODS</b>	Mainly gillnet
<b>MANAGEMENT METHODS</b>	<p><b>Input control:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gear licence (Scalefish fishing licence)</li> <li>• Species licence (Banded Morwong licence)</li> <li>• Temporal closure (March-April)</li> </ul> <p><b>Output control:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possession limit of 4 and bag limit of 2 individuals for recreational fishers</li> <li>• Minimum and maximum size (360–460 mm fork length)</li> <li>• TAC of 31.0 t for the 2020/21 quota year</li> </ul>
<b>MAIN MARKET</b>	Interstate

The quota management system with a TAC was introduced in late 2008. Up to and including the 2015/16 quota year, a given number of fish were allocated to each quota unit and the tonnage associated with the TAC was inferred based on an assumed average weight of 1.3 kg per fish. From 2016/17 onwards, quota has been set in weight. Until 2017/18, the TAC has undergone a staged reduction since 2012/13 (Table 4). As a response to the unusually high under-catch in 2020/21 due to COVID-19 pandemic-related market forces, the TAC for 2021/22 was set at 35.8 t through consultation with fishers at the Banded Morwong stakeholder forum and relevant Scalefish Fishery Advisory Committee meetings in early 2021. It was agreed that this TAC increase would be for one season only in 2021/22, and then resume at 31 tonnes thereafter, contingent on future modelling results.

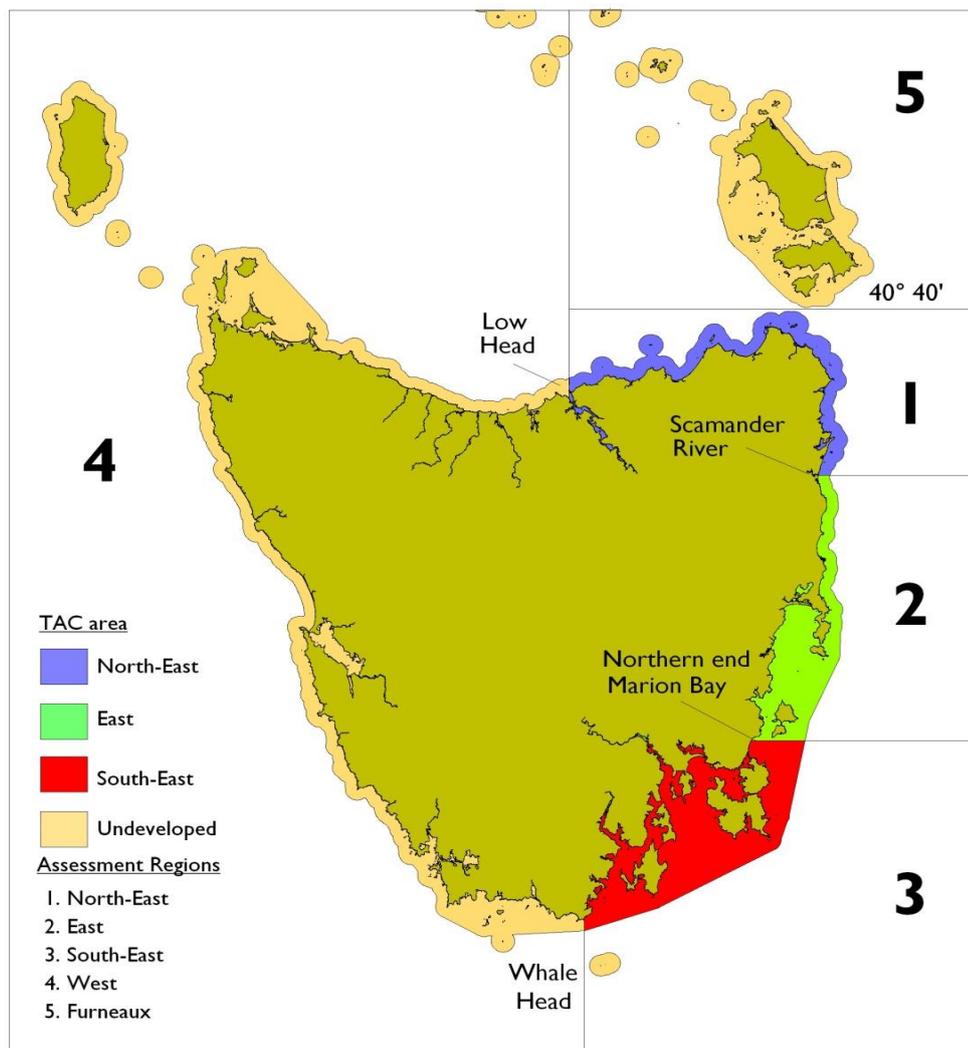
Post-release survival of Banded Morwong under current maximum permitted gillnet soak durations is very high (Lyle et al. 2014a). Gillnetting was considered a medium risk activity to Banded Morwong populations in the Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) of Bell et al. (2016), with the authors recognising that current management arrangements (namely the TAC and individual catch quotas) have the objective of gradually rebuilding biomass.

**Table 3.** Management changes in the Tasmanian Banded Morwong Fishery over time (from NRE 2017).

Date	Management changes
Pre 1987	Unrestricted access to Tasmanian Fishing Boat Licences (TFBL); unlimited access to scalefish and shark using all gear types; no restrictions on the amount of gillnet net that could be used; and unrestricted access to all other gear types (i.e., beach seine, purse seine, dipnet, squid jig, fish traps, small mesh gillnets, mullet nets, longlines, droplines and spears).
1987	Tasmanian Fishing Boat Licences were capped at 850.
1990	Restricted gillnetting in Shark Nursery Areas (SNAs). Commercial access to SNAs is limited to holders of non-transferable endorsements (38 endorsees).
31 May 1994	Ministerial warning issued explaining that any catches of Banded Morwong and wrasse taken after that date would not be used towards catch history, should previous catches be used to determine future access to the live fishery.
1994	Minimum size limit of 330 mm fork length and maximum size limit of 430 mm fork length introduced for Banded Morwong.
1995	An annual closed season in March and April was introduced to coincide with the peak spawning period of Banded Morwong.
1996	An interim non-transferable 'live fish' endorsement to take Banded Morwong and wrasse was introduced. Eligibility was based on a demonstrated history of taking one or both species (at least 50 kg between 1 January 1993 to 31 May 1994), and around 90 endorsements were issued.
November 1998	Introduction of a species-specific licence for the Banded Morwong Fishery (live or dead) in State waters. There were 29 licences issued. The minimum size limit was increased to 360 mm and the maximum size limit increased to 460 mm fork length.
November 2001	A daily bag limit of two fish was introduced for recreational fishers.
November 2004	The recreational bag limit of two fish was changed to a personal possession limit of two fish.
October 2008	Introduction of a quota management system for east coast waters from Low Head to Whale Head (excluding the Furneaux Group). A total of 1,169 Banded Morwong quota units were issued.
July 2009	An additional 24 Banded Morwong quota units were issued following a review of a quota allocation, bringing the total number of units to 1,193.
November 2009	Introduction of a 6-hour soak time for commercial gillnets
March 2011	Introduction of the Commercial Banded Morwong Quota Docket for all Banded Morwong fishers.
November 2015	New gillnet free areas for the protection of seabirds such as little penguins (applies to both commercial and recreational gillnets). Bag and possession limits were revised for the recreational fishery – bag limit of two individuals and possession limit of four individuals. New quota management arrangements for the Banded Morwong Fishery introduced as it moved from a number- to a weight-based quota management system for the 2016/17 quota year.
May 2017	New Commercial Banded Morwong Quota Docket and new Commercial Catch, Effort and Disposal Logbook for all Banded Morwong fishers.

**Table 4.** Total Allowable Catch (TAC) in the Tasmanian Banded Morwong Fishery since 2012/13.

Quota year	TAC (in t)	TAC (in no. fish)	No. of Fish/Quota Unit	kg / Quota Unit
2012/13	38.8	29,825	25	-
2013/14	37.2	28,632	24	-
2014/15	35.7	27,439	23	-
2015/16	35.7	27,439	23	-
2016/17	32.2	N/A	-	27
2017/18	31.0	N/A	-	26
2018/19	31.0	N/A	-	26
2019/20	31.0	N/A	-	26
<b>2020/21</b>	31.0	N/A	-	26
2021/22	35.8	N/A	-	30



**Figure 2.** Designated TAC area (areas 1, 2, and 3) and assessment regions for Banded Morwong from Low Head on the north coast to Whale Head in the south. Assessment regions 4 and 5 are currently undeveloped.

### **Recreational fishery**

Banded Morwong are a relatively minor component of the recreational fishery in Tasmania. The most recent survey in 2017/18 estimated the recreational landings of Banded Morwong at 2 tonnes (1,522 fish), making up slightly more than 5% of the total catch (commercial + recreational) during that season (Lyle et al. 2019). A total of 298 individuals were estimated as retained in the 2012/13 recreational fishing survey of Lyle et al. (2014b), equating to a total harvest of 0.5 tonnes, or around 1% of the total Banded Morwong landings for that year. An estimated 1,082 Banded Morwong were retained in 2010 (Lyle and Tracey 2012), representing almost 4% of total Banded Morwong landings in that year. No species-specific catch estimates for Banded Morwong were available in the two previous recreational fishing survey reports (Lyle 2005, Lyle et al. 2009).

## 2. Methods

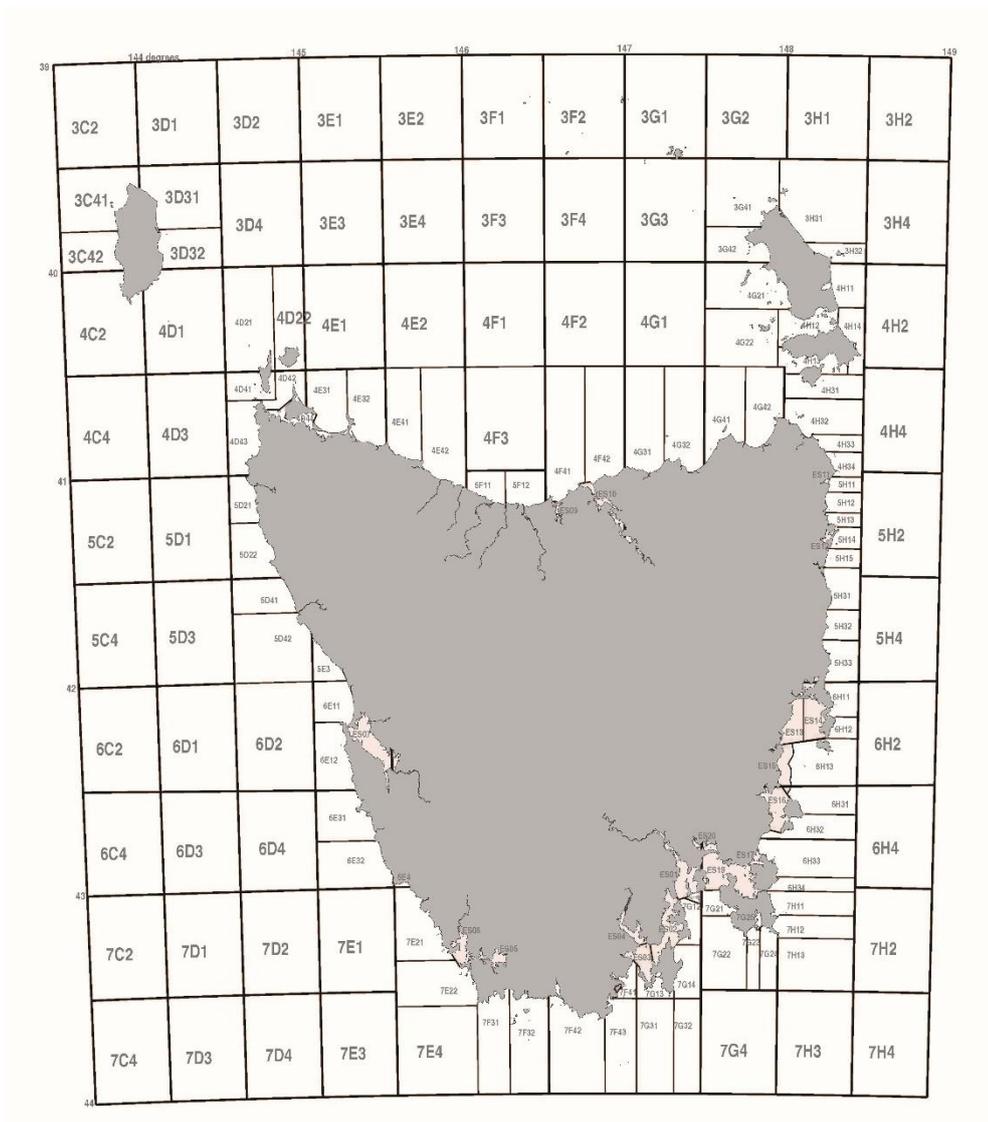
### Data sources

#### **Biological characteristics**

A sampling program commenced in 1995 to obtain biological information, in particular size and age composition, to inform assessments for Banded Morwong. Sampling was conducted annually in 1996, 1997 and between 2001–2005, then every second year from 2007 onwards (i.e., 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021). In this sampling program, fish are collected during the spawning closure by commercial fishers working under permit and contracted to the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies. Sampling sites and general fishing practices (including the use of standard commercial 'Banded Morwong nets') have been standardised as much as possible. Approximately 400 fish were collected in each sampling year. For each fish collected, FL (to the nearest 1 mm) and weight (to the nearest 1 g) were measured, and the pair of sagittal otoliths (hereafter otoliths) were removed, cleaned, and stored dry in plastic vials. Gonads were dissected, weighed (to the nearest 0.1 g), sexed and staged macroscopically according to West (1990). As sampling was conducted in 2021, the results of the sampling program up to 2021 are included here.

#### **Commercial fishery data**

Commercial catch and effort data are collected through compulsory Tasmanian Commercial Catch, Effort and Disposal Returns. The catch and effort logbooks have been amended several times (1995, 1999, 2007, 2010, 2013 and 2019) in an effort to report at finer spatial scales and provide greater operational detail. While the offshore fishing blocks are still at the 30 nm (1/2 degree) spatial resolution, the logbooks introduced in 2010 have redefined the scale of the coastal blocks (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Map of Tasmania displaying the fishing blocks.

## Data analysis

### **Biological characteristics**

Length and age frequency plots were developed for each sampling year. Sex and sampling-year specific patterns in growth of Banded Morwong were modelled using a modified version of the Schnute and Richards (1990) growth function fitted by nonlinear least-squares regression of FL on age. A sample of six recently settled juveniles collected from Bicheno in 1996, estimated to be around 6 months old, were used to anchor the growth functions for all years and sexes.

Generalised linear mixed-effect models (GLMMs) were used to model the length at maturity of female Banded Morwong. Maturity state (immature or mature) was treated as a binomial response variable with logit link function and modelled as a function of FL. Area (i.e., TAC Areas 1, 2 and 3; Figure 2) was modelled as a random effect term in all models to eliminate potential bias or pseudoreplication resulting from the non-independence of samples collected within the same area. Due to low numbers of immature females in the samples, sampling years were combined as follows: 1996–1997, 2001, 2002–2003, 2004–2005, 2011 & 2013, 2015 & 2017 & 2019, and 2021. Samples collected in 2007 and 2009 were excluded due to small numbers of immature females.

## Catch and Effort

For the purposes of this assessment, catch, effort and catch per unit effort (CPUE) analyses are restricted to commercial data provided for the period March 1995 to February 2021. The assessment year for Banded Morwong is based on the quota year (1<sup>st</sup> March to the last day of February the following year) rather than the financial year (July to June) as for other scalefish species. The current Banded Morwong assessment includes data up to and including the 2020/21 quota year (which ended 28 February 2021).

Under the quota management system, commercial catches prior to 2016/17 were reported as numbers of fish rather than weight. These numbers were converted to weight based on a conversion ratio of 1.3 kg per fish. In addition, and particularly prior to the introduction of the quota management system, fish were landed in a variety of forms, including gilled and gutted, trunked, and filleted. In these instances, the equivalent whole weight was estimated by applying a standard conversion factor<sup>1</sup>.

Two measures of effort have been examined in this and previous assessments: (i) days fished (i.e., number of days on which a catch of Banded Morwong was reported); and (ii) quantities of gear/time fished using the method (effort gear units). For gillnets (the main fishing method for Banded Morwong), effort gear units are measured in 100 m net hours.

Catch returns for which effort information was incomplete or unrealistically high or low (either due to data entry error or misinterpretation of information requirements by fishers) were flagged and excluded when calculating effort levels based on gear units or catch rates based on catch per unit of gear. No fishing records for 2020/21 needed to be excluded in this manner.

## Catch per unit effort

In the Banded Morwong Fishery, the amount of gear set and the fishing duration is recorded by fishers, however these data have not been reported consistently over time and among fishers. Accordingly, for the purposes of this assessment, CPUE is calculated using days fished as a measure of effort. Previous work has shown that this is highly correlated with CPUE derived from using gear and soak time where that data is reliably available (IMAS unpublished data).

Following Ziegler et al. (2007b), CPUE for Banded Morwong was standardised in order to remove the influence of confounding effects such as area, depth, season and operator on relative trends in abundance. CPUE was standardised using general linear models (GLMs). Standardisation of CPUE was conducted for an annual time scale, and at four spatial scales (whole of TAC area, and individual north-east, east and south-east areas within the TAC area). Data were restricted to skippers who had reported catches for at least two years.

The GLMs were fitted to different combinations of factors for which information were available, namely skipper, vessel, fishing block, depth zone fished (0–10 m, 11–20 m, 21–30 m, > 30 m), bimonthly period and reported seal interactions (presence or absence). A bimonthly period rather than month was included as a temporal factor to ensure there were sufficient records in each period to give reliable results. Due to the annual spawning season closure in March and April, five bimonthly periods were available for each year. Interaction terms between some of the factors were also considered, but these were limited to combinations for which sensible interpretations could be ascribed.

Standardised CPUE were fitted to natural log-transformed (Ln) catch rate data (assuming a lognormal distribution), using a normal distribution family with an identity link. All GLMs were fitted using a forward approach by manual stepwise addition of each factor starting with the time-step. The optimal model was chosen by minimisation of the Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC; Burnham and Anderson 1998). Adding new data from 2020/21 resulted in the same model

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<sup>1</sup> Conversion factors to whole weights are 2.50 for fillet; 1.50 for trunk; and 1.18 for gilled and gutted.

selection as in the 2019/20 assessment except for the South-East area, where a minor difference in the interaction term generated a better fit (Table 5).

**Table 5.** General Linear Models (GLMs) used to standardise catch per unit effort of Banded Morwong across the whole TAC area in the 2020/21 assessment, and in Area 1 (north-east coast), Area 2 (east coast) and Area 3 (south-east coast) as defined in Figure 2. Ln = natural log.

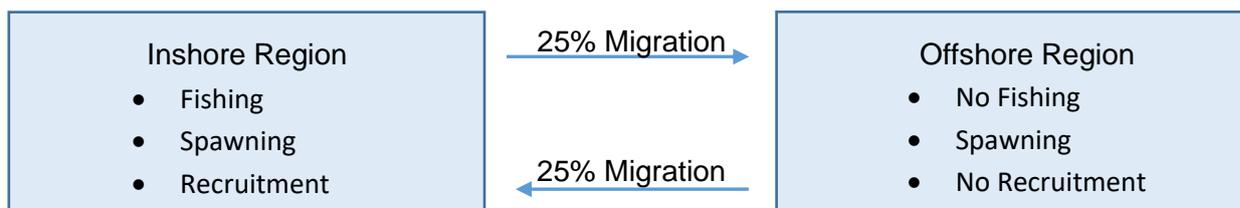
TAC Area	Model
Whole TAC area	$\text{Ln CPUE} = \text{Lnweight} \sim \text{BMWyear} + \text{Vessel} + \text{bimonth} + \text{seals} + \text{Block} + \text{depth} + \text{ClientID} + \text{Vessel:Block}$
North-East	$\text{Ln CPUE} = \text{Lnweight} \sim \text{BMWyear} + \text{Vessel} + \text{bimonth} + \text{seals} + \text{Block} + \text{depth} + \text{bimonth:Vessel}$
East	$\text{Ln CPUE} = \text{Lnweight} \sim \text{BMWyear} + \text{Vessel} + \text{bimonth} + \text{seals} + \text{Block} + \text{depth} + \text{ClientID} + \text{bimonth:Vessel}$
South-East	$\text{Ln CPUE} = \text{Lnweight} \sim \text{BMWyear} + \text{Vessel} + \text{bimonth} + \text{Block} + \text{ClientID} + \text{seals} + \text{Vessel:seals}$

## Stock modelling

### *Model structure*

The 2020/21 assessment was conducted using the Banded Morwong population model implemented in CASAL v 2.30 (Bull et al. 2012) (See Appendix A for model specifications). The CASAL framework is widely used for fisheries assessments, including several New Zealand fish stocks. The implementation of the Banded Morwong model in CASAL is mathematically equivalent to the previous model used to assess Banded Morwong stocks developed by Ziegler et al. (2007b). The model for the 2020/21 assessment was updated with catch and CPUE information along with biological survey data collected in 2021 (Table 6). The spatial configuration, key dynamical processes, and migration rate assumptions in the current model are illustrated in Figure 4. The model is split into two areas, inshore and offshore, and separates processes into two time-steps per year to reflect a 10-month fishing period and a 2-month no-fishing period during the estimated spawning period. The model was run for the entire TAC area instead of each of the three sub-areas individually. This is consistent with recent assessments of Banded Morwong, which have stressed that a greater emphasis should be placed on the whole quota region for TAC setting purposes.

Because the distribution of Banded Morwong extends beyond the depth of the fishery, there is the potential for a component of the TAC area 'stock' to be located in a depth refuge (safe from fishing mortality). The model accounted for this by specifying a fished portion of the stock inshore and an unfished portion offshore. In recent assessment years, the model has consistently estimated that approximately 50% of the adult stock resides in the depth refuge. An alternative, single area, version of the model was also run that does not assume 50% of the adult stock is exempt from fishing pressure. This model configuration estimates spawning stock biomass (SSB) based on the more conservative assumption that individuals escape any risk of fishing mortality solely based on their size (through fishing selectivity and upper size limits), rather than the area in which they reside. Other than this difference, the single area model is identical to the standard, two area model. Estimated SSB from both model configurations are presented in section 3.



**Figure 4.** Diagram of spatial configuration of the two-area model implemented in CASAL. The Offshore Region represents a depth refuge where fish avoid exploitation. Migration rates are assumed to be 25% annually from Inshore to Offshore and vice versa. Spawners are assumed to be present in both regions and recruitment to only occur Inshore.

Data weighting of CPUE was performed using the Francis Method (Francis, 2011). Data weighting is a formal method for balancing the relative impact of different data sources in a statistical model. The data weighting procedure developed by Francis (2011) (i.e., the Francis Method) is the accepted method for weighting both CPUE and age composition data in a fishery stock assessment. While both these data types are included in the Banded Morwong model, the Francis Method has only been applied in recent assessments (since 2017/18) and only for CPUE data.

The relative impact of CPUE and age composition was examined with likelihood profiles. Likelihood profiles are a tool routinely used in Commonwealth assessments and are the preferred method for illustrating the impact of different data sources on assessment modelling results after data weighting (Pawitan 2001). Although they have not been provided in previous reports, likelihood profiles are considered in this report to illustrate the relative impacts of CPUE and age composition data sources on the model estimates of pre-fishing spawning stock biomass (SSB<sub>0</sub>) (Figure 16). Estimated SSB<sub>0</sub> is important as it acts as a population scaling parameter and therefore has a direct impact on the projected level of SSB used to evaluate the fishery.

Likelihood profiles function by leveraging the method used to optimize a statistical model. The Banded Morwong model is optimized by minimizing a joint negative log-likelihood function called the total likelihood. The total likelihood is an additive combination of individual likelihoods based on the available data sources, primarily CPUE and age composition data. The value of SSB<sub>0</sub> which minimizes the total likelihood is taken to be the optimal value given the combination of data.

The likelihood profile of SSB<sub>0</sub> consisted of running the banded morwong model over a fixed range of values above and below the optimal value of SSB<sub>0</sub> estimated by the model. For each value of SSB<sub>0</sub> in the range, the likelihood value was calculated for the total likelihood and for the likelihood components of CPUE and age composition (y-axis in Figure 16). The optimal value of SSB<sub>0</sub> was approximately 540 tonnes, so 25 values of SSB<sub>0</sub> in a range from 500 to 600 tonnes were chosen (x-axis in Figure 16).

The values of the total likelihood and each component were plotted together to visualize how much they changed moving away from the optimal value of SSB<sub>0</sub>. This demonstrated the relative weight of each data component where the data source with the likelihood that matched the total likelihood the most has the most weight on estimated SSB<sub>0</sub>. In other words, the likelihood profile illustrates how much loss of fit to each data component resulted from changing SSB<sub>0</sub>. Data components with a large amount of information about SSB<sub>0</sub> will show dramatic deterioration in fit (steep curve) as SSB<sub>0</sub> is changed from the optimal estimate (Lee et al. 2014).

Likelihood profiles also allow conflicts between data sources to be examined. If all likelihood components indicate SSB<sub>0</sub> should be at the same value, the different data sources do not

conflict with one another as to the best estimate of SSB<sub>0</sub>. If the likelihood components indicate SSB<sub>0</sub> should be at different values, a conflict between data sources exists. If data sources do conflict with one another, it may indicate that more robust data weighting is justified.

### *Model inputs*

*Biological components:* Sex-specific lengths-at-ages 1–16 were modelled using the Schnute and Richards (1990) growth function across all fishery areas during the years when biological sampling was conducted (1990–1998 (=‘1990’ in model), 1999–2001 (=‘1999’ in model), 2002–2003 (=‘2002’ in model), 2004–2006 (=‘2004’ in model), 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021). Early sampling years were aggregated based on similar growth trends and to ensure a large enough sample size following Ziegler et al. (2007b). Interpolated growth was assumed for non-biological sampling years within the time series and extrapolated from the most recent sampling year for projected years. Sex-specific patterns in age-at-maturity were modelled using a logistic function fit to gonad stage. Natural mortality was assumed to be constant across sex, age, and time at  $M = 0.05$ .

Consistent with preceding assessments, the fishing selectivity-at-length was assumed to follow a knife-edge curve, selecting fish of both sexes between lengths 360 and 460mm with 100% probability. This selectivity function is a rough approximation to the true selectivity, reflecting the keyhole size limit currently in place for the commercial fishery. The survey selectivity-at-length was specified to follow a dome-shaped curve that reflects every fish retained using a net identical to the commercial net (Murphy and Lyle, 1999). The model converts these selectivity-at-length specifications to sex-specific selectivity-at-age using the length-at-age data.

*Fishery (harvest) components:* Annual total catches within the TAC area for the period 1990/91–2020/21 and standardised CPUE (described above) for the period 1995/96–2020/21 were used in the model. Catchability was estimated in the model from the relationship between observed CPUE and exploitable biomass.

*Recruitment:* Recruitment was modelled to occur at the start of each year and was assumed to be equal between males and females and occur uniformly along the entire coastline of the modelled area. All recruitment in the model was assumed to occur to inshore populations, consistent with observations of juvenile Banded Morwong in inshore shallow waters and a gradual outward migration with increasing size (Leum and Choat 1980; McCormick 1989b). Recruitment year class strength (YCS) was estimated in the model from the survey age composition data. The mean and variability from YCS estimates during the period 1986-2015 were resampled by the model to project SSB into the future.

### *Model outputs*

The model was used to estimate SSB trajectories within the TAC area from the start of the fishery to present, and into the future under the current management scenario (i.e., a total allowable catch of 31 t at a unit value of 26 kg / quota unit) with the exception of assumed catch for the ongoing 2021/22 season. In contrast to other seasons, the TAC for the 2021/22 season is set at 35.8 t to account for a portion of the TAC under-catch in 2020/21. Model fits to the CPUE (Figure 14) and age composition (Figure 15) indices were evaluated by visual inspection and examination of residuals. Likelihood profiles are also considered to evaluate and demonstrate the impact of CPUE and age composition data on estimates of pre-fishing spawning stock biomass (SSB<sub>0</sub>) (Figure 16).

### *Model review*

We note that the assessment model supporting our evaluation of stock status has been under major review since 2016/17. This major review was substantially advanced in 2020. Key findings were detailed in section 4 of the 2019/20 stock assessment report and presented at the Banded Morwong stakeholder forum as well as relevant Scalefish Fishery Advisory Committee meetings.

Multiple research priorities were subsequently put forward to the Tasmanian Research Advisory Group, aiming to help strengthen biomass predictions and prevent unsustainable levels of fishing (last reported in 2016/17). In response to review outcomes and discussions during subsequent meetings, the two alternative models described above (standard two area version and the more conservative single area model) were run to adhere to the precautionary approach until research on population biomass and exchange between shallow and deeper reef habitats has been completed. Uncertainty about selectivity and discard mortality, which was identified as the second highest potential source of uncertainty about model predictions, will be addressed as new data for parameterization becomes available. The CASAL input files that contain the current model specifications are attached to this report for transparency and traceability (Appendix A).

Other sensitivities identified during the review, including life history parameter estimation, data weighting, and data standardisation, will be subject to continuing review. This approach of continuous improvement as new information and understanding of stocks becomes available is best practice in fishery stock assessments.

**Table 6.** Changes made to the Banded Morwong assessment model data inputs since 2019/20.

Year	Type	Alteration
2020/21	Data inputs	Inclusion of catch and standardised CPUE data for 2020/21
		Inclusion of sex-specific growth biological data for 2021
		Inclusion of sex-specific survey age composition data for 2021
	Model parameters	Update the cv on CPUE time series using Francis (2011) method

## **Assessment of stock status**

### **Stock status definitions**

In order to assess the Banded Morwong Fishery in a manner consistent with the national approach (and other jurisdictions) we have adopted the national stock status categories used in the Status of Australian Fish Stocks (SAFS) reporting (Table 7). These categories define the assessed state of the stock in terms of recruitment impairment, which is often treated as a limit reference point. Depleted stocks are not generally collapsed but they do have reduced productivity. The scheme used here does not attempt to assess the fishery against any target outcomes.

### **Performance indicators and reference points**

The determination of stock status is based on the consideration of model outputs and the commercial catch and effort data, which are assessed by calculating fishery performance indicators and comparing them with the limit reference point (SSB of 30% of initial SSB must be exceeded in five years (i.e., 2025 for the current assessment) with a 90% probability).

Other measures are also taken into consideration in the determination of stock status such as changes in biological characteristics of the stock, indicators of stock stress and significant external factors related to fishing activity.

**Table 7.** The stock status classifications that were adopted for this assessment.

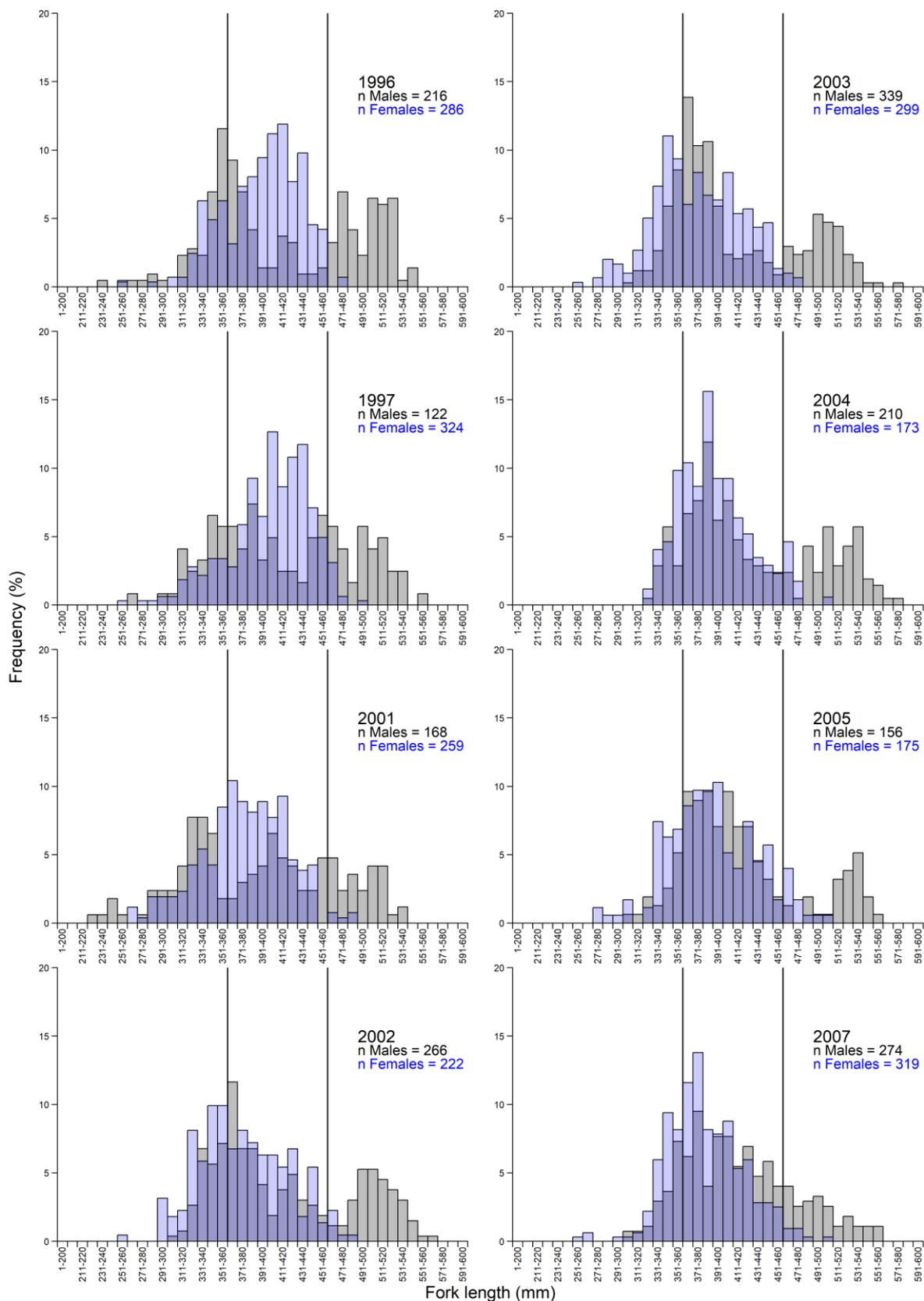
Stock status	Description	Potential implications for management of the stock
<b>SUSTAINABLE</b>	Biomass (or proxy) is at a level sufficient to ensure that, on average, future levels of recruitment are adequate (recruitment is not impaired) and for which fishing mortality (or proxy) is adequately controlled to avoid the stock becoming recruitment impaired.	Appropriate management is in place.
<b>RECOVERING</b> 	Biomass (or proxy) is depleted and recruitment is impaired, but management measures are in place to promote stock recovery, and recovery is occurring.	Appropriate management is in place, and there is evidence that the biomass is recovering.
<b>DEPLETING</b> 	Biomass (or proxy) is not yet depleted and recruitment is not yet impaired, but fishing mortality (or proxy) is too high (overfishing is occurring) and moving the stock in the direction of becoming recruitment impaired.	Management is needed to reduce fishing mortality and ensure that the biomass does not become depleted.
<b>DEPLETED</b>	Biomass (or proxy) has been reduced through catch and/or non-fishing effects, such that recruitment is impaired. Current management is not adequate to recover the stock, or adequate management measures have been put in place but have not yet resulted in measurable improvements.	Management is needed to recover this stock; if adequate management measures are already in place, more time may be required for them to take effect.
<b>UNDEFINED</b>	Not enough information exists to determine stock status.	Data required to assess stock status are needed.

# 3. Results

## Biological characteristics

### **Length frequency composition**

Significant changes in the length frequency composition between the late 1990s and the early 2000s raised concerns about the Banded Morwong stock (Figure 5 and Ziegler et al. 2007a). Female fork length was concentrated in the centre of the legal size limits in the 1990s and has since shifted to concentrating near the lower size limit (Figure 5). On the other hand, the length frequency of males has remained similar across survey years, with a consistent proportion of males larger than the upper size limit from the 1990s to present.



**Figure 5.** Length composition of sampled Banded Morwong by year for females (transparent blue) and males (solid grey). Dark blue represents overlap between transparent blue and solid grey. The year is the year in which sampling was conducted and 'n' is the sample size of each sex. The solid vertical lines represent minimum and maximum size limits of 360mm and 460mm respectively.

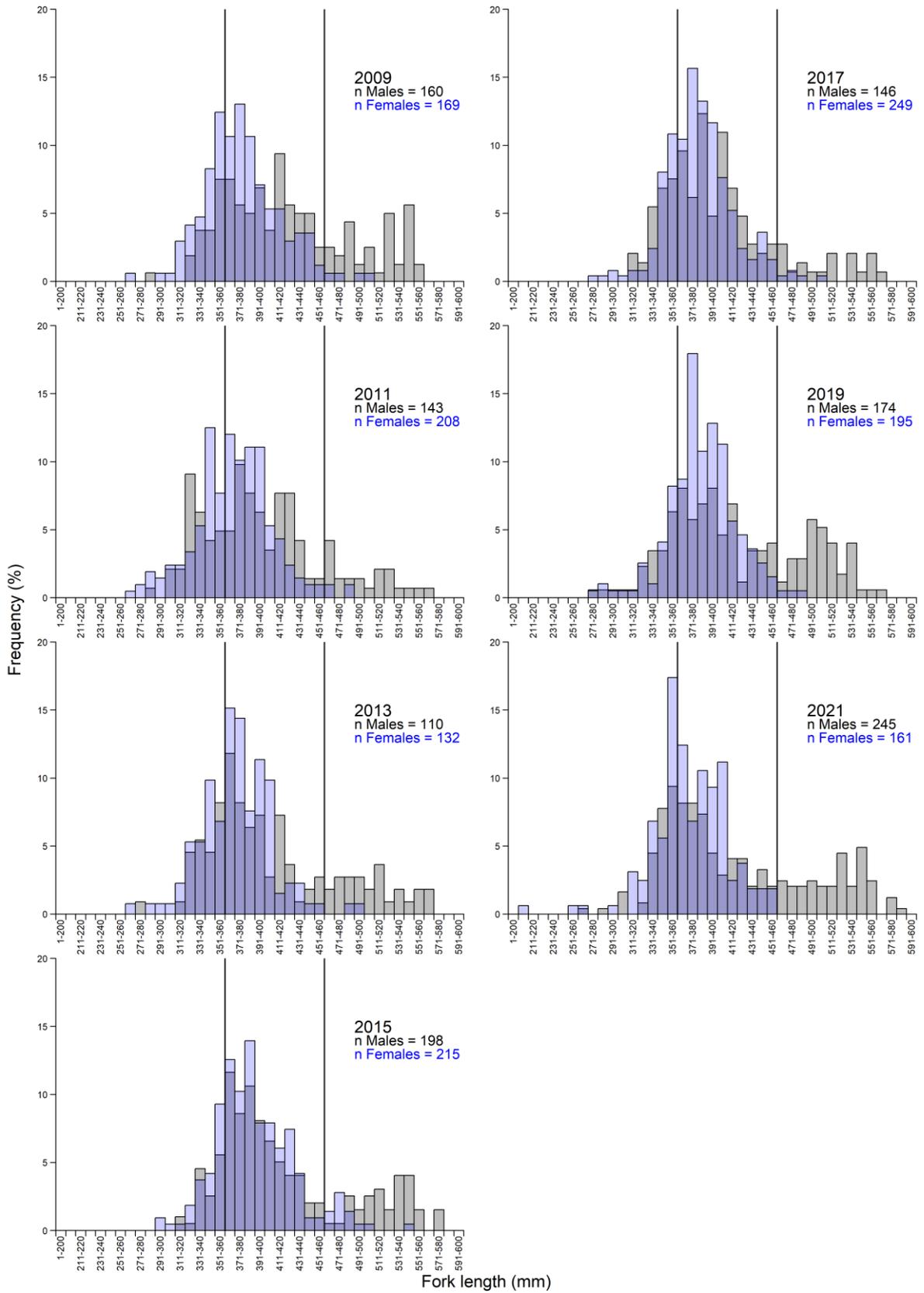
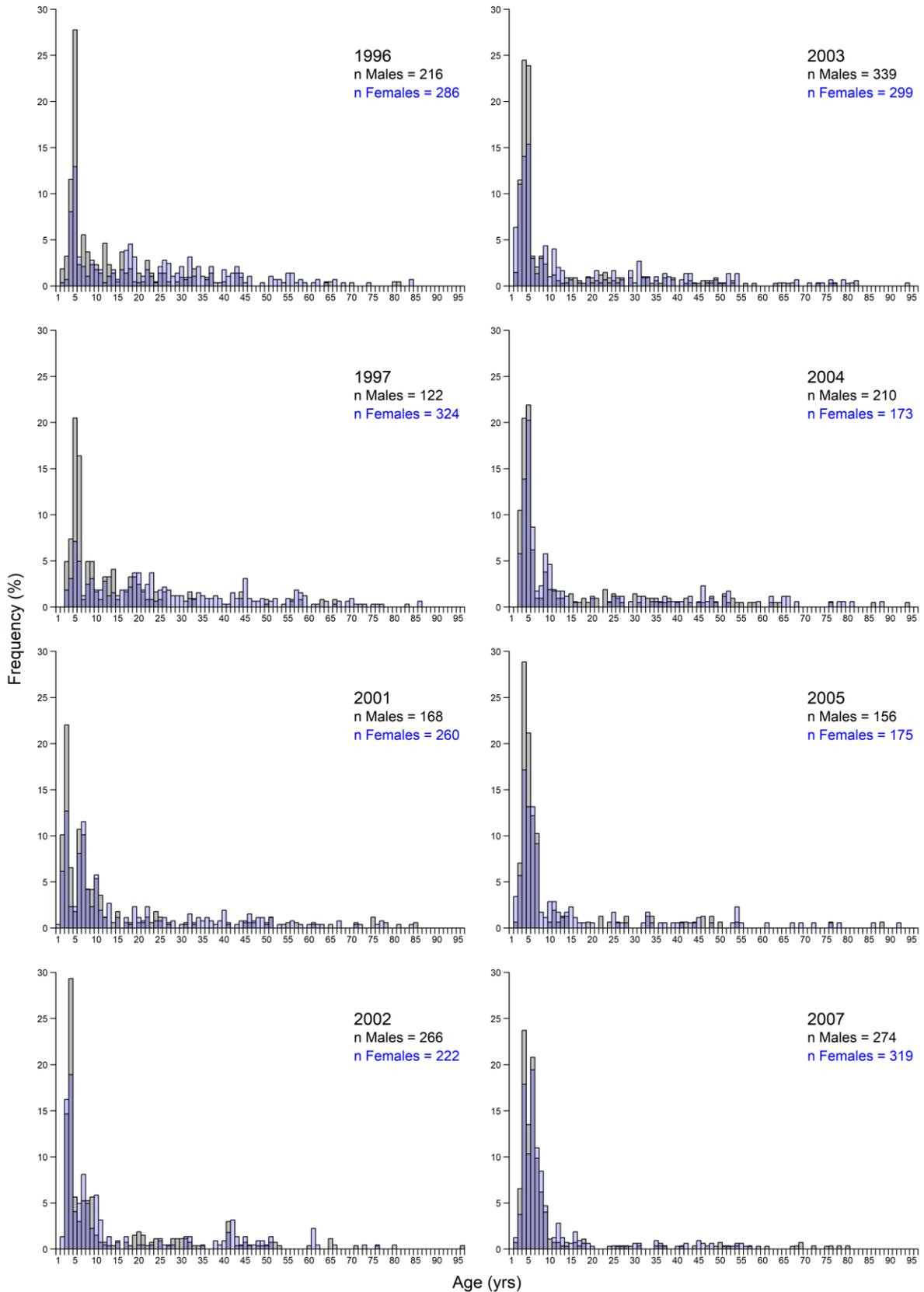


Figure 5. - continued.

## **Age frequency composition**

Age frequency composition also showed signs of change from the late 1990s (Figure 6 and Ziegler et al. 2007a). The age structure shifted from a wide distribution of ages in both females and males in the late 1990s to a concentrated distribution towards younger fish, with very few individuals exceeding 15 years old. By the 2010s, the distribution has increased slightly but remains concentrated towards younger fish compared to the 1990s. Specifically, female fish exceeding 25 years old were common in the 1990s, making up nearly half of the sampled age composition. Since the early 2000s, female fish rarely exceed 25 years, and the bulk of their composition is now concentrated at young fish. Male composition has also decreased, but to a lesser degree compared to females. There were fewer males originally exceeding 25 years in the late 1990s compared to females, and the bulk of their composition has remained closer to those values. The difference between the change in composition in females compared to males is summarized by the change in their average age over time (Figure 7). The average age of females in the survey samples has decreased from approximately 25 years in the 1990s to a stable average of 10 years between 2009 and 2021. The average age of males has remained comparatively stable since the 1990s, remaining between 8 and 15 years through to 2021.



**Figure 6.** Age composition of sampled Banded Morwong by year for females (transparent blue) and males (solid grey). Dark blue represents overlap between transparent blue and solid grey. The year is the year in which sampling was conducted and 'n' is the sample size of each sex.

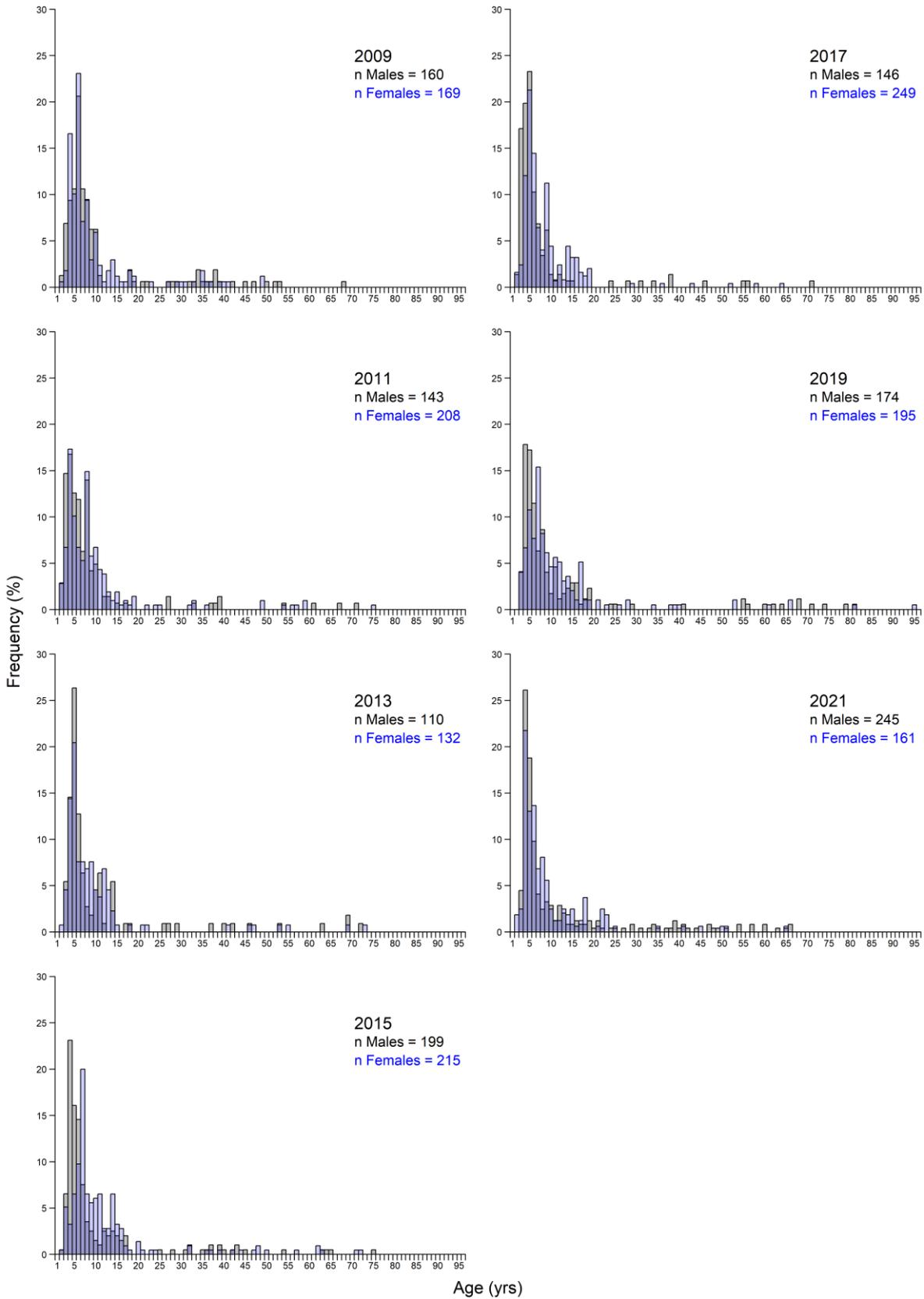
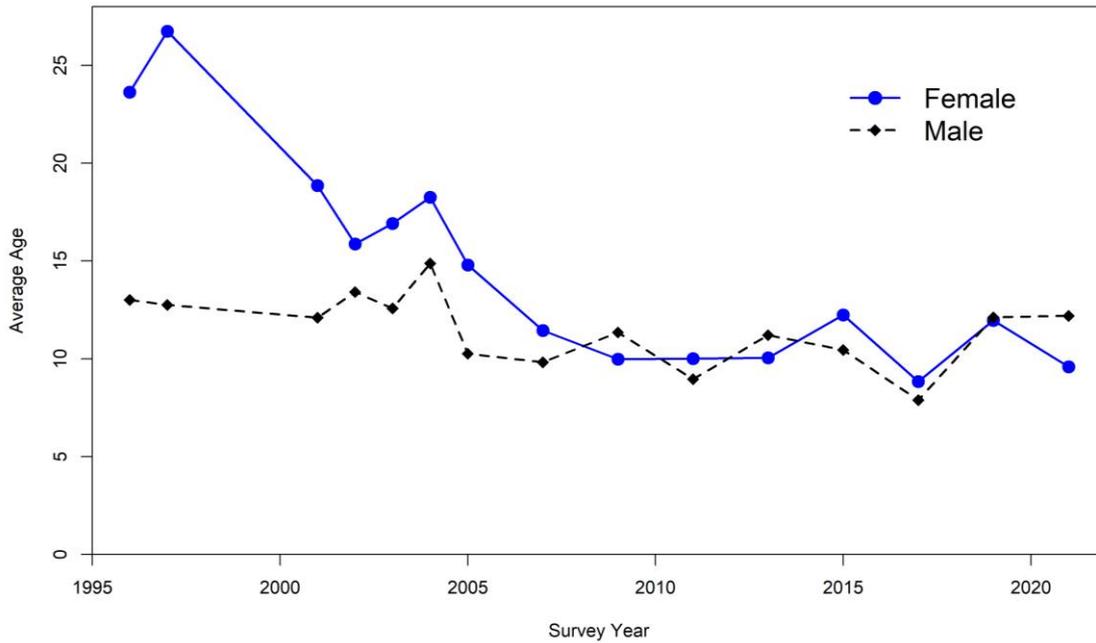


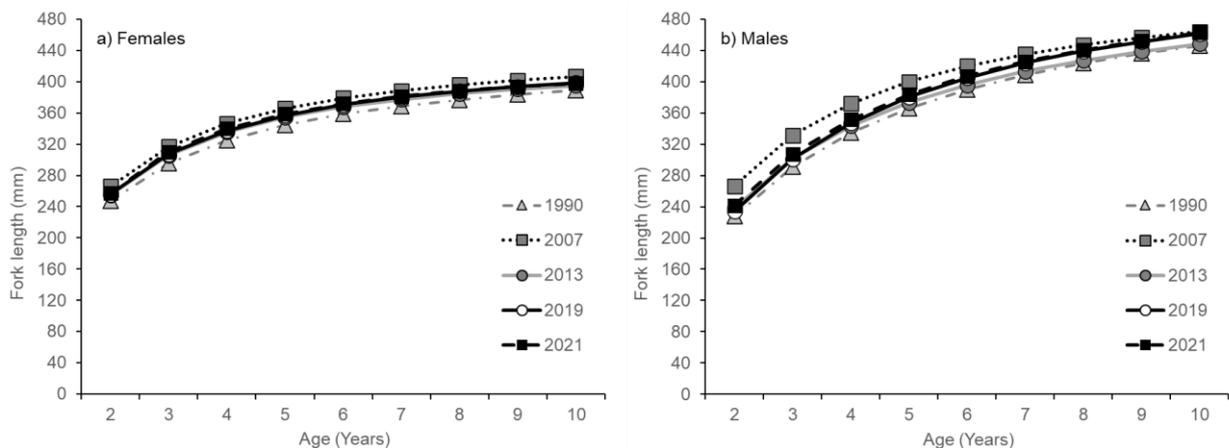
Figure 6. – continued.



**Figure 7.** Average age of female (blue solid line) and male (black dashed line) fish from survey samples. Average age of females has decreased since surveys began in 1996 but average age of males has stayed relatively constant.

### Growth rates

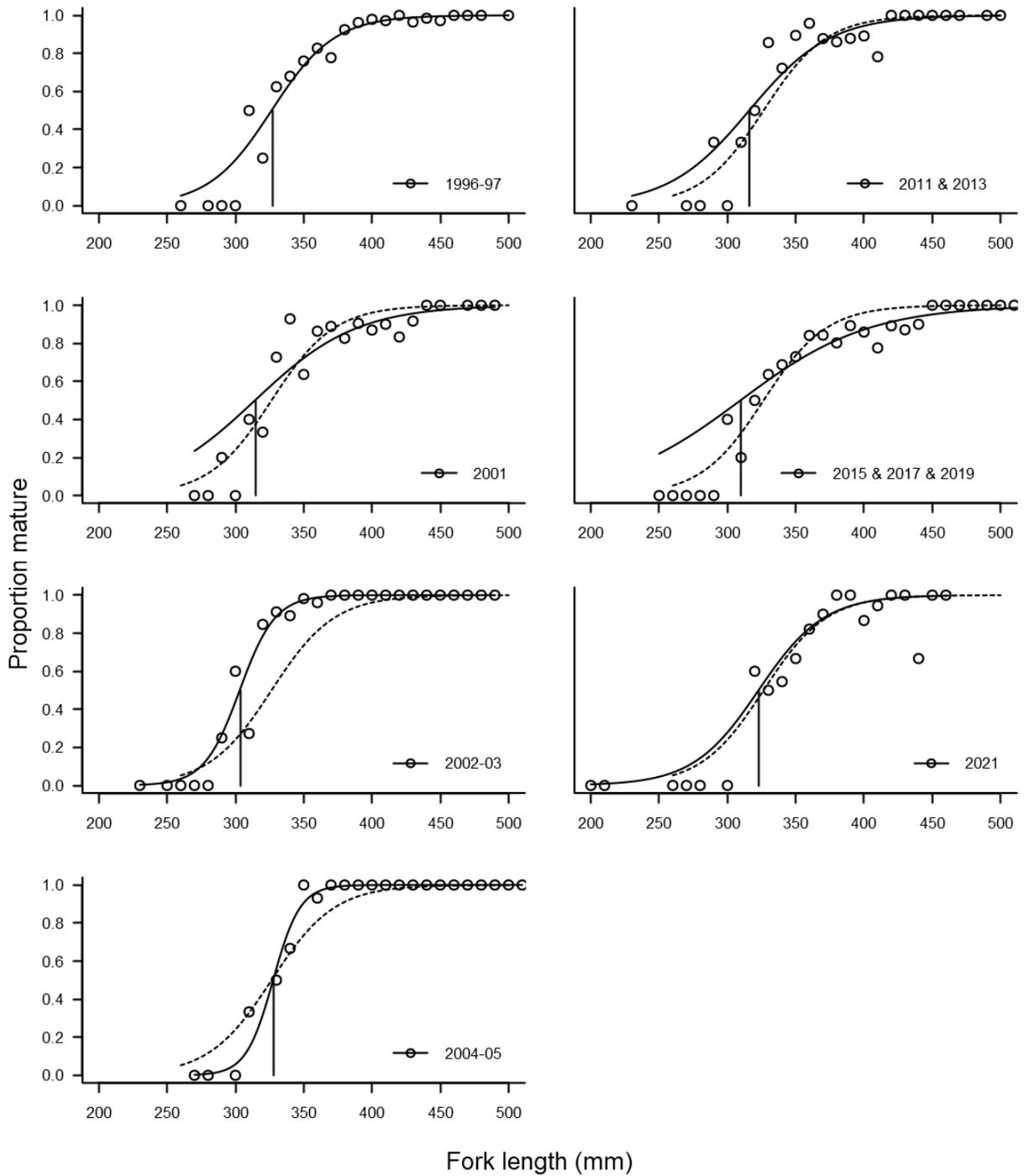
Growth functions fitted to the length at age data provided evidence for fluctuations in growth over the sampling period (Figure 8). Based on initial sampling between the early 90's and 2007, previous studies found that growth rates for Banded Morwong younger than 10 years old increased through time, possibly indicating impacts of fishery-induced evolution (Ziegler et al. 2007a). However, since 2007, growth rates have fluctuated between 1990 and 2007 levels, suggesting that environmental effects could be another important driver of interannual variation in growth rates. For example, variation in sea surface temperature is a demonstrated driver of fluctuations in fish size (Audzijonyte et al. 2020).



**Figure 8.** Predicted lengths for female (left) and male (right) Banded Morwong aged 2–10 years from the Schnute and Richards (1990) growth model for samples collected in 1990, 2007, 2013, 2019, and 2020.

## **Length at female maturity**

Fluctuations in the length at which female Banded Morwong mature are evident among sampling years. Length at 50% maturity declined from around 325 mm in 1996–1997 to around 315 mm in 2001, and to below 305 mm in 2002–2003 (Figure 9; Ziegler et al. 2007a). In 2004–2005 length at maturity returned to a similar level to that observed in 1996–1997, a result Ziegler et al. (2007a) attributed to increased length at age by 2004–2005. Length at maturity decreased again after 2005, with 50% of females maturing at around 316 mm in 2011–2013 and 310 mm in 2015–2019. In the latest survey in 2021, length at maturity increased again to around 320 mm.



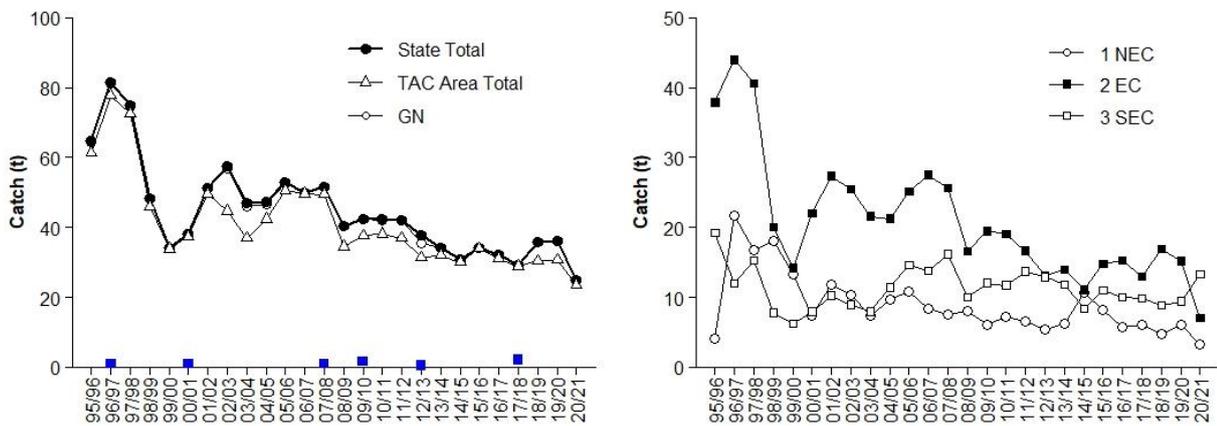
**Figure 9.** Predicted proportion of mature female Banded Morwong from generalised linear mixed-effects models examining the effect of fork length and sampling period on maturity. Circles represent the proportion of mature females in each 10 mm length class. Data were pooled into the period 1996–1997, 2001, 2002–2003, 2004–2005, 2011 & 2013, 2015 & 2017 & 2019, and 2021. The model fitted to the 1996–1997 data is shown in plots for subsequent sampling years as a dashed line as a reference. The solid vertical line represents the length at 50% maturity. Note data collected in 2007 and 2009 were excluded due to small numbers of immature individuals.

## Catch, effort and catch rates

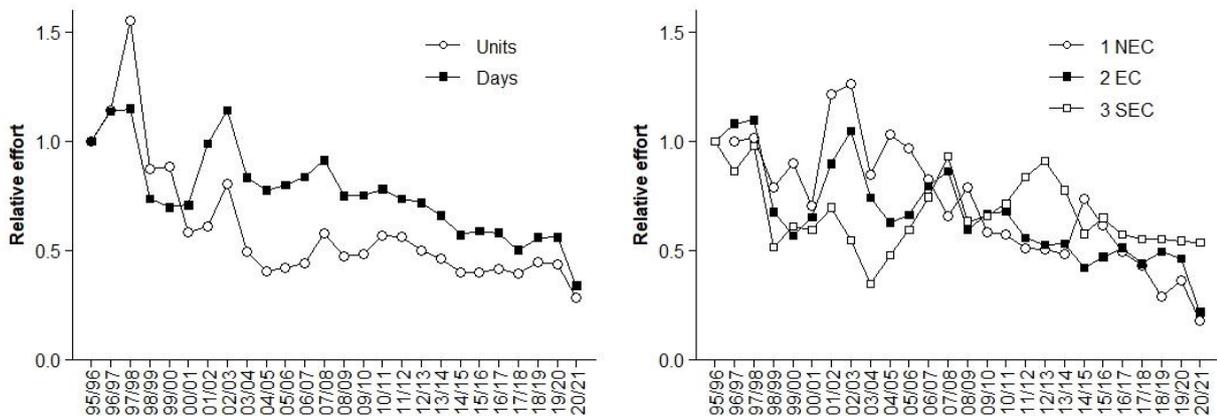
### Catch and effort

State-wide commercial catches have been relatively stable since the introduction of the quota system in 2008/09, and in 2020/21 were estimated at 25.0 t (Figure 10). The total catch in the TAC area (Areas 1–3 in Figure 2) in 2020/21 was 23.6 t (comprising 3.2 t from the north-east coast (NEC; Area 1), 7.1 t from the east coast (EC; Area 2) and 13.3 t from the south-east coast (SEC; Area 3), which represented 76.1% of the 2020/21 TAC (i.e., a TAC under-catch of 23.9%). Catches on the north-east and east coasts decreased relative to 2019/20 whereas they increased on the south-east coast (Figure 10). The unusually high under-catch was due to the deflated market condition related to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020/21. The total catch in the non-TAC area (Areas 4 and 5 in Figure 2) in 2020/21 was 1.4 t. The most recent estimate of recreational catch during the 2017/18 season was 2 t (Lyle et al. 2019).

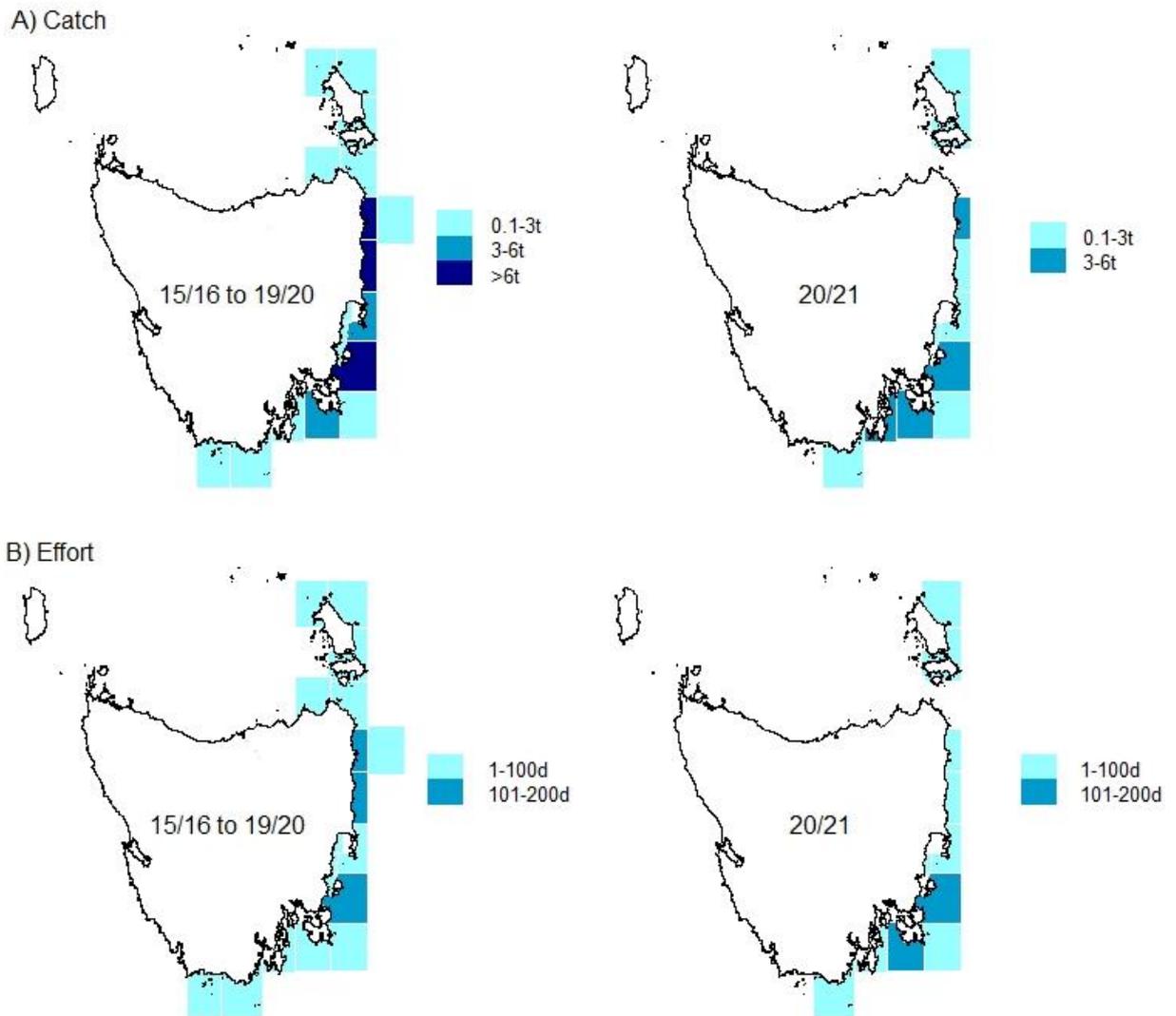
In 2020/21 State-wide effort in both days fished and gear units (100 m net hour) decreased relative to 2019/20 (Figure 11). Effort (in days fished) decreased on the north-east and east coasts relative to 2019/20 but remained at consistent levels on the south-east coast (Figure 11; Figure 12).



**Figure 10.** Banded Morwong commercial catches (t). Left: Total state-wide (State Total) and gillnet (GN) catches, Total TAC Area catches, and best estimates of recreational catches (blue squares); Right: regional gillnet catches in the TAC areas 1 NEC, 2 EC and 3 SEC.



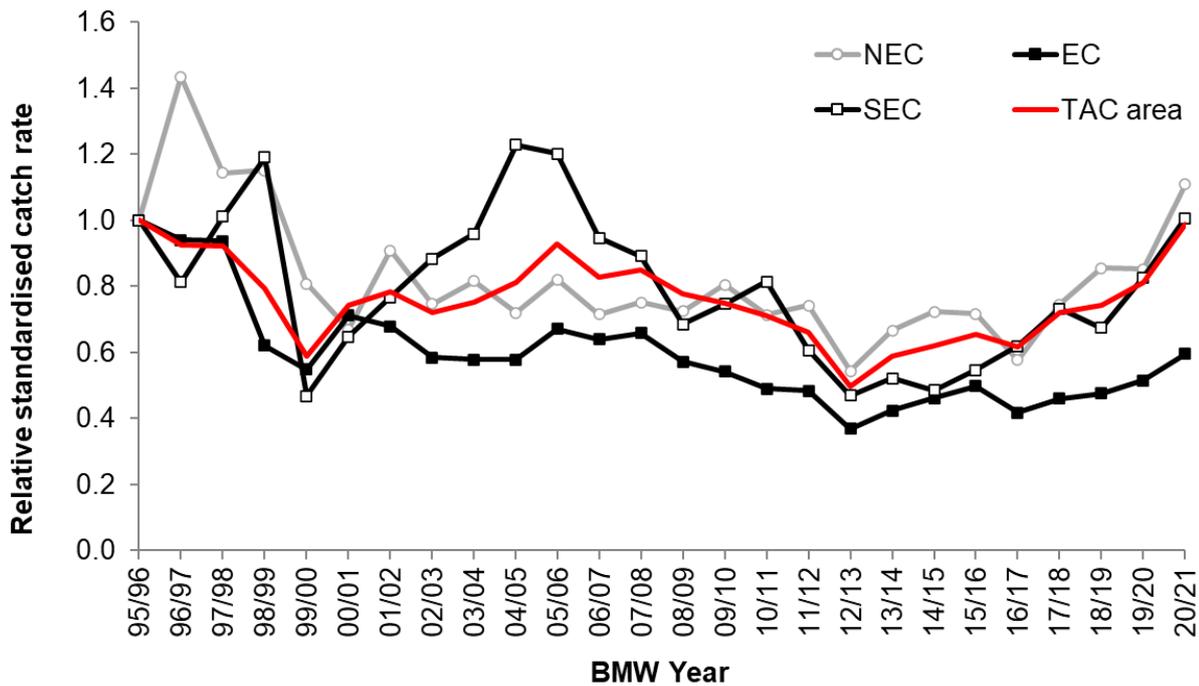
**Figure 11.** Left: State-wide commercial effort based on gear units and days fished relative to 1995/96. Right: Commercial effort in days fished in the TAC areas 1 NEC, 2 EC and 3 SEC relative to 1995/96.



**Figure 12.** A) Banded Morwong total catches (tonnes per year) and B) effort (days per year) by fishing block. The left-hand column displays spatial patterns in total catch (top) and effort (below) by block averaged from 2015/16 to 2019/20, while the right-hand column displays spatial patterns in total catch (top) and effort (below) observed by block during 2020/21.

### *Standardised catch per unit effort*

Standardised CPUE in the whole TAC area increased to 91% of the 1995/96 level in 2020/21 (Figure 13). Regionally standardised CPUE also increased across the north-east, east, and south-east coasts relative to 2019/20. There remains a general trend of increasing standardised CPUE since 2013/14, which is strongest on the north-east and south-east coast.



**Figure 13.** Banded Morwong standardised gillnet catch per unit effort (CPUE by days fished) relative to 1995/96, in the TAC areas North-East Coast (NEC), East Coast (EC) and South-East Coast (SEC), and from the whole TAC area (red line).

### Selected stock modelling results and stock status

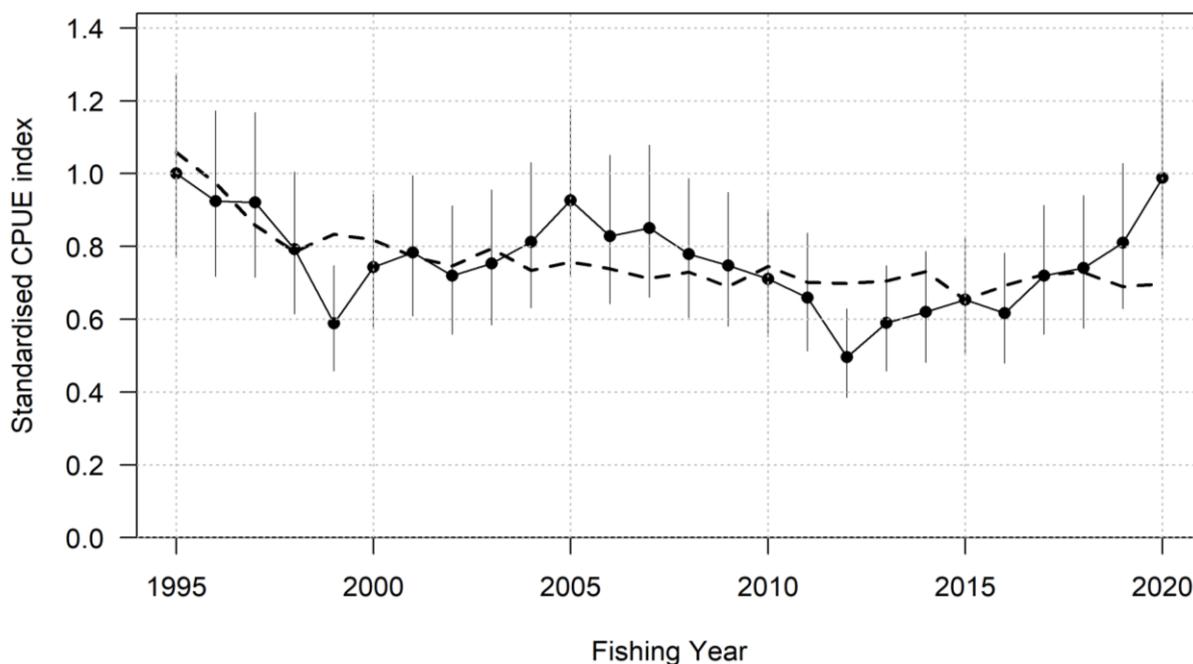
The model fit to CPUE and age composition data from the biological survey was carefully considered (Figure 14; Figure 15). The model only captured rough patterns in both CPUE trends and age composition over time. More or less consistent increases in CPUE over recent years were not reflected (Figure 14). As the CPUE data is not sex-specific, a likely explanation is that increases in CPUE are driven largely by males, obscuring changes in female abundance. The age composition data is sex-specific and, since SSB is based on female biomass, it is inherently more capable of reliably estimating SSB0 and detecting changes in SSB.

The relative weight awarded to each of these data sets within the model also contributes to how well the model fits to them and how much the model relies on each data type to inform estimates of SSB0 and predictions of SSB used to set catch limits. Applying the Francis Method (Francis, 2011) for weighting data resulted in a CV of 0.123 (assuming a lognormal distribution) for the CPUE data. A similar value was used in the 2017/18 assessment and updating it in this assessment did not result in a significant change in SSB predictions.

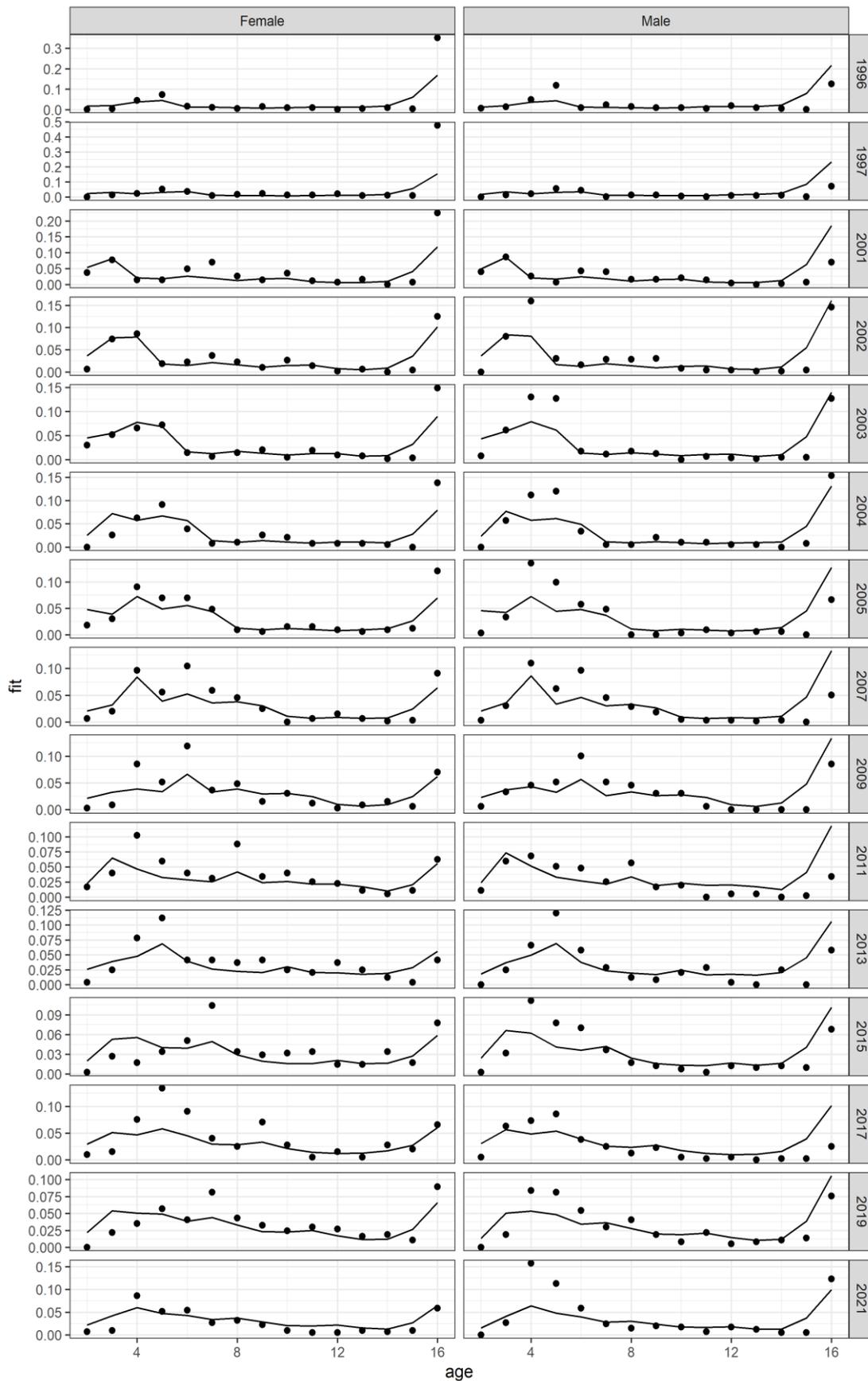
The value of SSB0 for the current assessment was estimated at approximately 538 tonnes at the minimum of the total likelihood (Figure 16). This value is very close to the value suggested by the age composition data alone, which contains more information about SSB0 as reflected by its proximity to the total likelihood. Corresponding estimates based on the CPUE data alone suggest SSB0 should be higher, however CPUE data is more uncertain (the CPUE likelihood is flatter) and holds less information about SSB0. Such conflicts between CPUE and age composition data are not uncommon in integrated assessments (Francis, 2011) and the appropriate way to address them is with formal data weighting of both data sources.

Several sensitivity analyses were performed attempting age composition weighting in addition to weighting CPUE. These analyses had moderate impacts on SSB projections. However, changes to the current weighting procedure involving alternative weighting of age composition data are

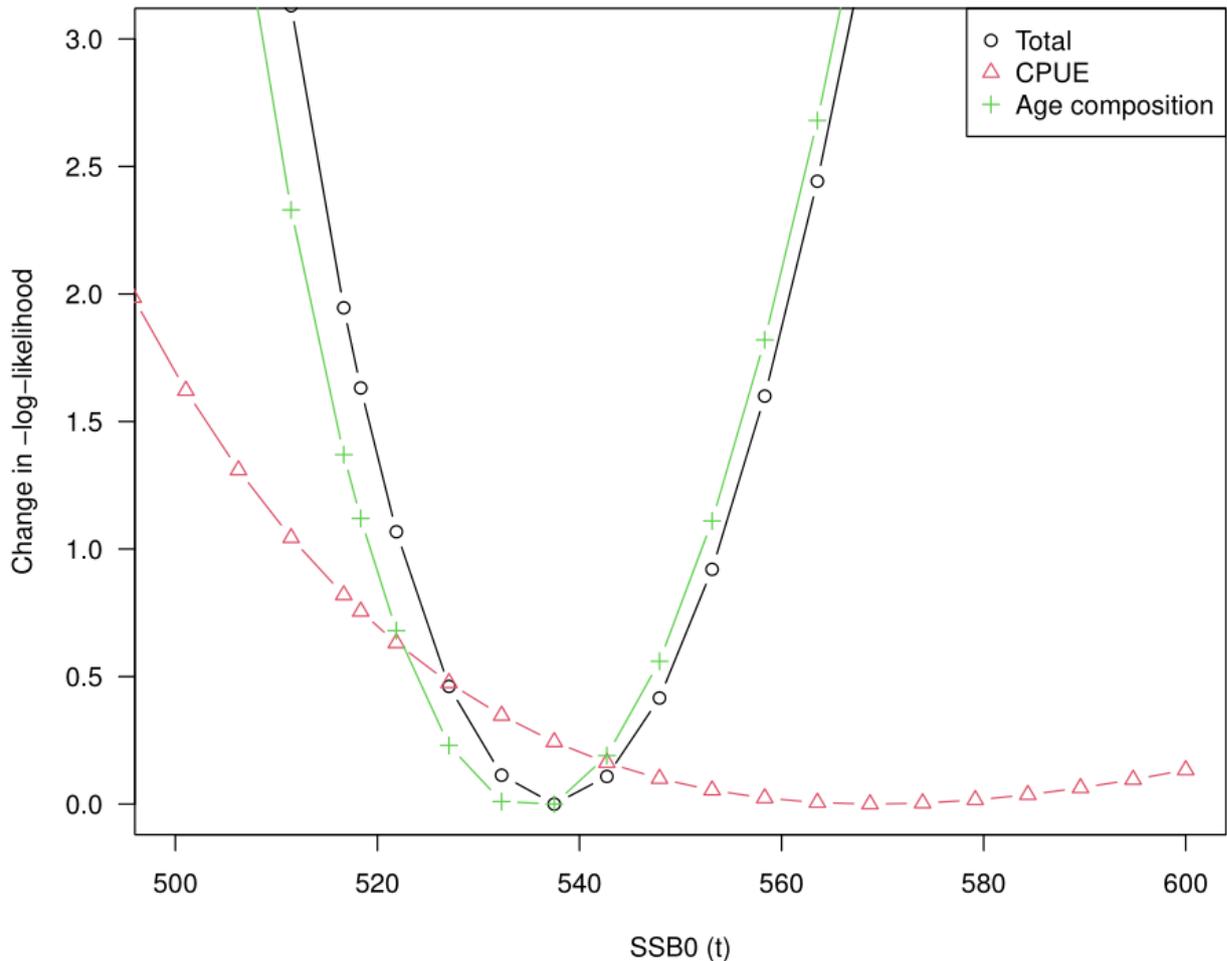
not recommended at this time due to the higher uncertainty in CPUE data (Figure 16). This higher uncertainty in the CPUE data can be reduced with empirical estimates of selectivity, sex-specific catch records, more robust standardisation (accounting for improved estimates of selectivity), and evidence that CPUE is proportional to abundance. These aspects of the CPUE data should be a focus of future research to provide more robust estimates of SSB.



**Figure 14.** CASAL model fits to the catch per unit effort (CPUE) index. The solid line is the observed (standardised) CPUE, and the dashed line is the model fit. Solid bars represent 95% confidence intervals around the observations.



**Figure 15.** CASAL model fits to the age composition data from the biological surveys. The dots represent the observed age class proportional abundances for females (left) and males (right), and the solid line is the model fit.

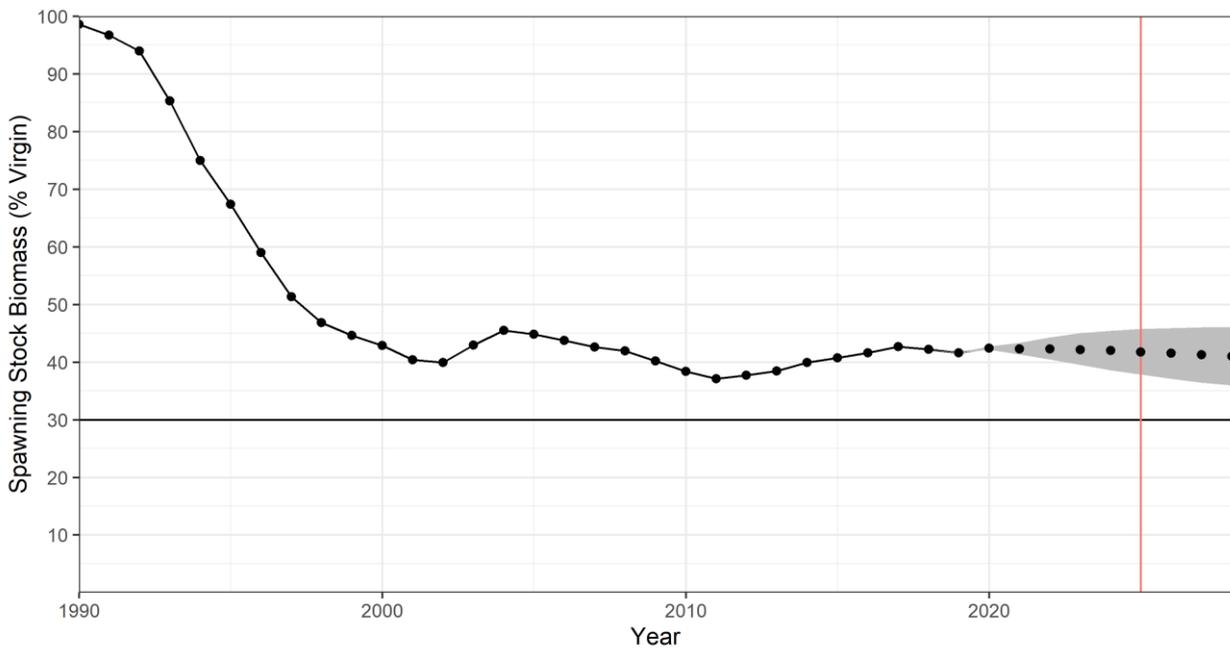


**Figure 16.** CASAL model likelihood profile for SSB0 including the CPUE (red triangles) and age composition (green crosses) likelihood components and the total likelihood (black circles). The total is the sum of the two components and the minimum of the total indicates the optimal value of SSB0 (approximately 538 tonnes). The x-axis is a range of fixed values of SSB0 at which the model is re-run, and the values of the total likelihood and likelihood components (y-axis) calculated. The gradient of each likelihood component and its proximity to the total likelihood indicates its uncertainty and therefore its relative capacity to inform SSB0. For example, the age composition curve is steeper and closer to the total likelihood compared to the CPUE curve, therefore it holds more information about SSB0.

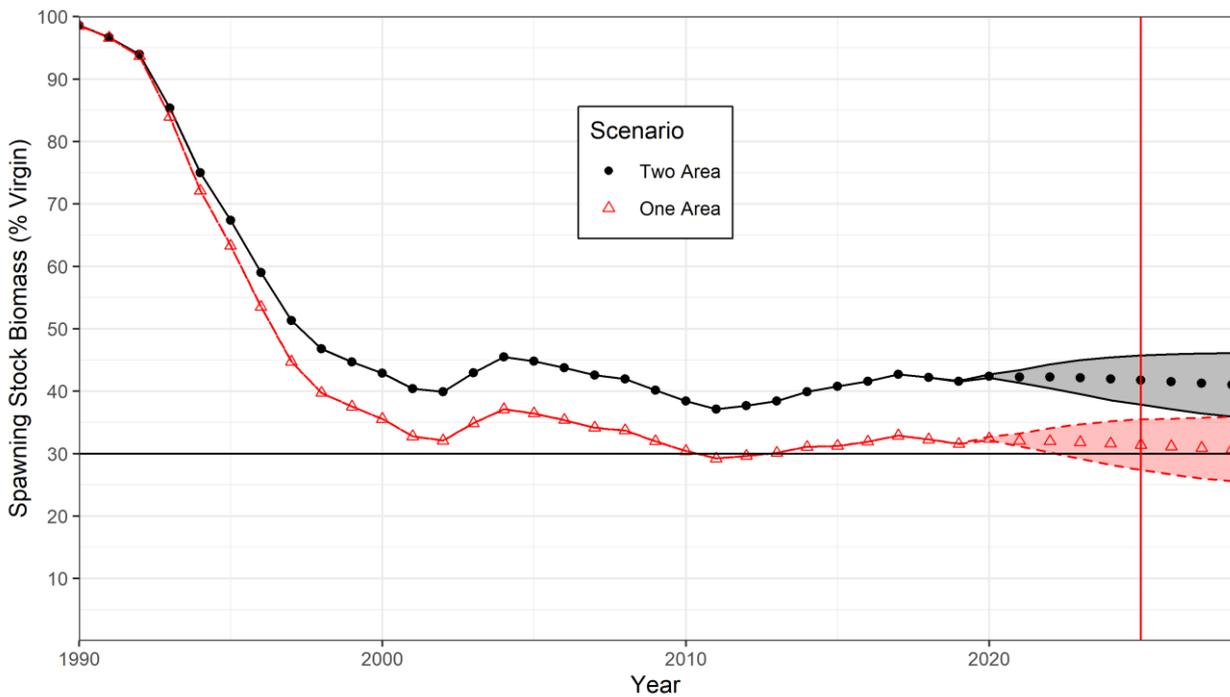
The standard two area assessment model estimated SSB to be at 42% of initial SSB (38% at the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile) 5 from years from now (2020/21 season), representing a slight increase compared to predictions in 2019/20. These predictions indicated that the current harvest strategy (i.e., 26 kg / quota unit and a TAC of 31 t in all future years (except for 30 kg / quota unit in 2021/22) with 0% projected future TAC under-catch is sufficient to meet the limit reference point of 30% of that of initial SSB within a 5-year period with 90% probability (Figure 17).

The more conservative, single area, version of the stock assessment model estimated SSB in 5 years to be at 31% of initial SSB (27% at the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile) (Figure 18).

Estimates based on the standard two area model indicate that at a jurisdictional stock level the biomass of Banded Morwong is unlikely to be depleted, and that the current level of fishing mortality is unlikely to cause the stock to become recruitment impaired. Based on that estimate, Banded Morwong in Tasmanian waters is classified as a **sustainable stock**.



**Figure 17.** Current status and forward projections (to 2028) of Banded Morwong spawning stock biomass (SSB) expressed as a percentage of the unfished SSB, based on the 2020/21 harvest strategy of 26 kg / quota unit (with the exception of 30 kg / quota unit in 2021/22) and a future under-catch of 0%. The red vertical line indicates the 5-year period in which SSB is required to meet the limit reference point of 30% of initial SSB (indicated by the grey horizontal line) with a 90% probability (as shown by the dark shaded area).

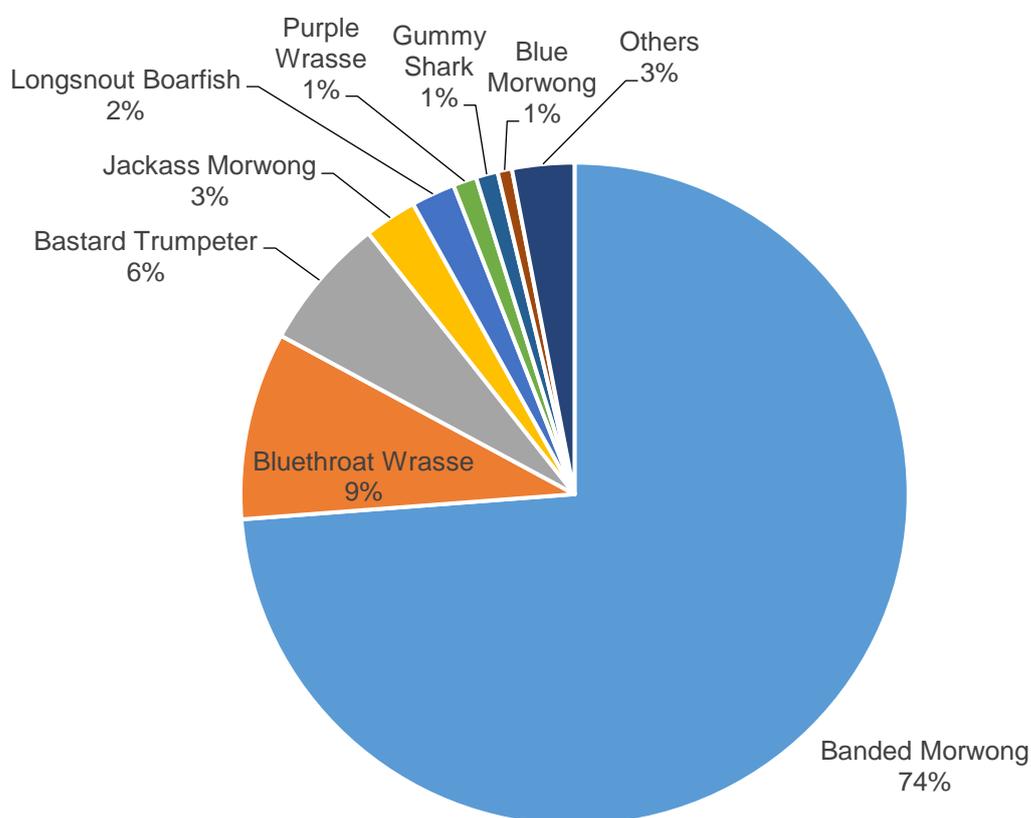


**Figure 18.** Current status and forward projections of Banded Morwong spawning stock biomass (SSB) assuming a two area model (grey) and a one area model (red).

## 4. By-product and protected species interactions

By-product in the Banded Morwong Fishery is low, which is due in part to the large mesh sizes used for Banded Morwong fishing (~140 mm mesh size). In an ecological risk assessment (ERA) published by Bell et al. (2016), no species achieved a ranking of high vulnerability within the Banded Morwong Fishery due to the minimal gillnet effort on the west coast, the shallow nature of fishing operations relative to depths inhabited by bycatch species, low selectivity of smaller by-product and bycatch species given the large mesh sizes imposed in the fishery, and high post-release survival of many of the key by-product and bycatch species.

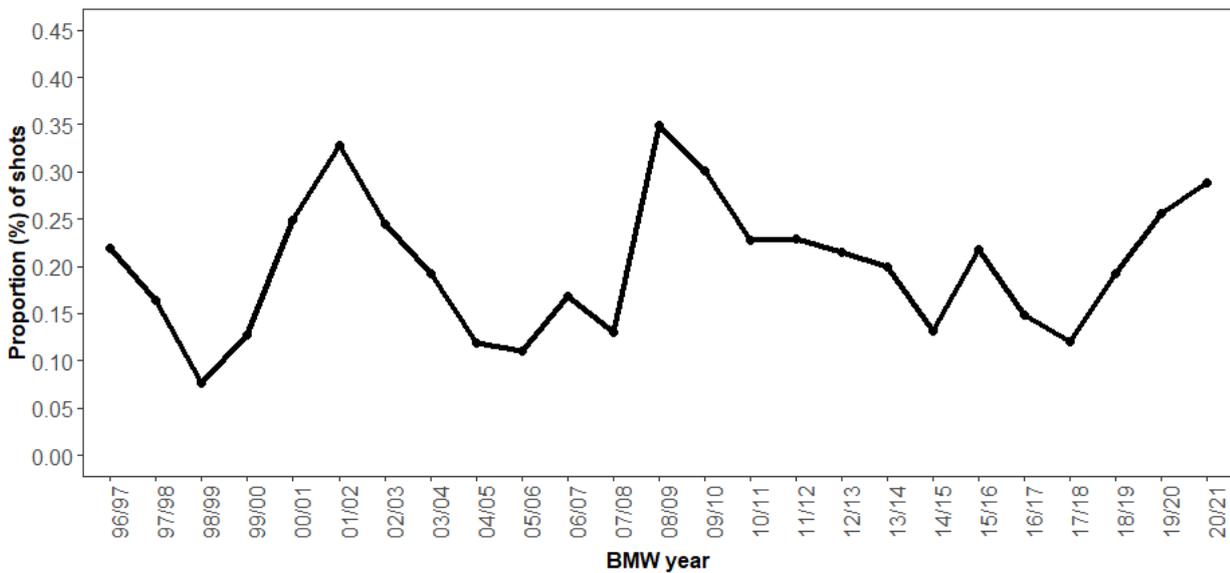
During the 2020/21 quota year, Banded Morwong comprised 74% (down 3% compared to the previous quota year) of all fish caught during targeted Banded Morwong fishing trips, with Bluethroat Wrasse and Bastard Trumpeter constituting the most commonly caught by-product species (9% and 6% of the total catch for 2020/21, respectively) (Figure 22).



**Figure 19.** Catch composition of targeted Banded Morwong gillnet fishing trips in 2020/21. A targeted Banded Morwong fishing trip was defined as a trip on a given day by a given fisher where Banded Morwong were retained.

Mortality of Banded Morwong and other scalefish species due to predation and fishery interactions with Australian and New Zealand fur seals is largely unknown and represents another source of uncertainty in the assessment. Seals could cause substantial mortality to

Banded Morwong, and are known to damage fishing gear and influence fishers behaviour, all of which is likely to impact catches and catch rates. This is believed to be caused predominantly by individual 'rogue' seals which learn to target Banded Morwong gillnet fishing. The proportion of shots in which fishers reported a seal interaction increased slightly in 2020/21 relative to 2019/20, with seal interactions being reported for around 30% of all shots (Figure 23). However, it has been historically unclear how consistently fishers interpret and report a seal interaction, or the effect seal predation has on catches (i.e., how many fish are lost). Additionally, effects on fisher behaviour are poorly understood. A number of fishers have indicated that they are setting a proportion of their nets as a decoy to reduce catch losses through seal interactions. The remainder of their gear is set elsewhere, but the effect of additional nets on seal interactions, or on fisher catch metrics (e.g., effort), is poorly understood.



**Figure 20.** The proportion of shots in which fishers reported an interaction with a seal or seals. Interactions constitute physical interactions with the fishing gear, vessel, or catch.

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# Appendix A

## CASAL Population Input File (population.csl file)

```
@initialization
B0 300

@size_based false

@min_age 1

@max_age 16

@plus_group true

@sex_partition true

@mature_partition false

@initial 1984

@current 2020

@final 2029

@n_areas 2

@area_names In Off

@randomisation_method empirical

@first_random_year 2017

@annual_cycle
time_steps 2
recruitment_time 1
spawning_time 2
spawning_part_mort 0.5
spawning_ps 1
aging_time 1
growth_props 0 0.5
M_props 0.83 0.17
baranov false
fishery_names BMW_1990_1994 BMW_1995_1998 BMW_1999_2021 BMW_2022+
fishery_times 1 1 1 1
recruitment_areas In
spawning_all_areas true
spawning_use_total_B false
n_migrations 2
migration_names IO OI
migrate_from In Off
migrate_to Off In
migration_times 1 1
fishery_areas In In In In
spawning_sex female
```

```

@migration IO
prop 0.25

@migration OI
prop 0.25

@y_enter 1

@standardise_YCS true

@recruitment
YCS_years 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994
1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008
2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019
YCS 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
1 1
first_free 1986
last_free 2016
year_range 1986 2016
SR none
sigma_r 1.2
rho 0.0

@maturity_props
male constant 0
female logistic 4 2

@natural_mortality
all 0.05

@selectivity_names Sel_BMW_Gillnet Sel_1990-1994 Sel_1995-1998 Sel_1999-
2021 Sel_2022+

@size_at_age_type data

@size_at_age_dist normal

@size_at_age_years 1990 1999 2002 2004 2007 2009 2011 2013 2015 2017 2019
2020

@size_at_age_step 2

@size_at_age_miss interp

@size_at_age
female_1990 15.15 24.72 29.60 32.53 34.47 35.86 36.90 37.71 38.35 38.87
39.31 39.68 39.99 40.26 40.50 40.71
female_1999 18.47 28.14 32.39 34.72 36.17 37.15 37.85 38.37 38.78 39.10
39.36 39.57 39.75 39.90 40.03 40.14
female_2002 18.02 27.66 32.13 34.67 36.29 37.41 38.23 38.85 39.34 39.72
40.04 40.31 40.53 40.72 40.88 41.03
female_2004 17.34 27.80 32.71 35.49 37.27 38.49 39.37 40.04 40.56 40.98
41.32 41.60 41.84 42.04 42.22 42.37
female_2007 16.09 26.58 31.70 34.66 36.57 37.89 38.87 39.60 40.18 40.65
41.03 41.35 41.61 41.84 42.04 42.21
female_2009 14.84 25.17 30.42 33.54 35.59 37.03 38.11 38.93 39.58 40.11
40.54 40.90 41.21 41.48 41.71 41.91
female_2011 15.85 25.92 30.82 33.65 35.48 36.76 37.69 38.40 38.95 39.40
39.77 40.07 40.33 40.55 40.74 40.91

```

female\_2013 15.06 25.47 30.58 33.54 35.45 36.78 37.75 38.48 39.06 39.52  
 39.90 40.22 40.48 40.71 40.90 41.07  
 female\_2015 16.04 25.23 30.11 33.15 35.23 36.76 37.94 38.86 39.62 40.24  
 40.77 41.22 41.61 41.95 42.25 42.52  
 female\_2017 16.43 27.01 32.02 34.85 36.65 37.88 38.78 39.45 39.98 40.39  
 40.73 41.01 41.25 41.45 41.62 41.77  
 female\_2019 15.15 25.59 30.75 33.74 35.69 37.05 38.04 38.80 39.40 39.88  
 40.27 40.60 40.88 41.12 41.33 41.51  
 male\_1990 13.21 22.84 29.12 33.47 36.65 39.05 40.92 42.41 43.62 44.63  
 45.47 46.18 46.78 47.31 47.76 48.16  
 male\_1999 15.87 26.72 32.52 36.10 38.53 40.29 41.62 42.67 43.50 44.19  
 44.77 45.25 45.67 46.04 46.35 46.63  
 male\_2002 17.34 27.64 33.24 36.78 39.24 41.05 42.45 43.56 44.46 45.21  
 45.84 46.38 46.85 47.26 47.63 47.95  
 male\_2004 15.90 27.33 33.63 37.57 40.26 42.21 43.68 44.84 45.76 46.52  
 47.15 47.69 48.15 48.54 48.89 49.19  
 male\_2007 15.13 26.66 33.14 37.22 40.00 42.01 43.53 44.71 45.65 46.42  
 47.06 47.59 48.05 48.44 48.78 49.08  
 male\_2009 14.95 25.54 31.66 35.66 38.50 40.62 42.28 43.61 44.70 45.62  
 46.40 47.07 47.65 48.16 48.62 49.02  
 male\_2011 15.67 26.22 32.07 35.80 38.39 40.31 41.79 42.97 43.93 44.73  
 45.40 45.98 46.48 46.92 47.31 47.66  
 male\_2013 13.43 23.86 30.15 34.33 37.33 39.57 41.33 42.73 43.88 44.84  
 45.66 46.36 46.96 47.50 47.96 48.38  
 male\_2015 15.73 26.27 32.32 36.28 39.09 41.21 42.86 44.19 45.29 46.21  
 46.99 47.67 48.26 48.78 49.25 49.66  
 male\_2017 16.31 27.19 33.22 37.07 39.75 41.74 43.27 44.49 45.49 46.32  
 47.03 47.63 48.16 48.62 49.02 49.39  
 male\_2019 12.89 23.39 30.13 34.73 38.03 40.50 42.40 43.91 45.13 46.14  
 46.97 47.68 48.28 48.80 49.24 49.64  
 cv 0.1  
 female\_2020 14.85 25.72 30.99 33.98 35.88 37.18 38.12 38.82 39.37 39.8  
 40.15 40.44 40.68 40.89 41.06 41.22  
 male\_2020 13.56 24.15 30.73 35.17 38.35 40.74 42.59 44.07 45.28 46.28  
 47.12 47.84 48.45 48.99 49.46 49.87

@size\_weight  
 a\_female 0.000000035629  
 b\_female 2.874566219  
 a\_male 0.000000037293  
 b\_male 2.852388667  
 verify\_size\_weight 50 .500 2.7500

@fishery BMW\_1990\_1994  
 years 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002  
 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016  
 2017 2018 2019 2020  
 catches 5.2560 5.6190 12.5230 71.5330 95.3540 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0  
 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0  
 selectivity Sel\_1990-1994  
 U\_max 0.995

@fishery BMW\_1995\_1998  
 years 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007  
 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020  
 catches 62.1784 78.74362 72.62622 45.9694 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0  
 0 0 0 0 0 0  
 selectivity Sel\_1995-1998  
 U\_max 0.995

```

@fishery BMW_1999_2021
years 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011
2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020
catches 33.49807 37.36104 49.48103 44.72973 36.90789 42.42793 50.6856
49.70253 49.41701 34.489 37.4215 37.9483 36.27 31.74745 32.63184 30.2349
34.4982 31.2 28.9666 30.4681 30.6917 23.6015
future_years 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029
future_catches 35.8 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
selectivity Sel_1999-2021
U_max 0.995

```

```

@fishery BMW_2022+
years 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011
2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020
catches 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
future_years 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029
future_catches 0 31 31 31 31 31 31 31
selectivity Sel_2022+
U_max 0.995

```

```

@selectivity Sel_BMW_Gillnet
all size_based double_normal 38 9 14.25

```

```

@selectivity Sel_1990-1994
all size_based double_normal_plateau 33 15 0.1 0.1 1

```

```

@selectivity Sel_1995-1998
all size_based double_normal_plateau 33 10 0.1 0.1 1

```

```

@selectivity Sel_1999-2021
all size_based double_normal_plateau 36 10 0.1 0.1 1

```

```

@selectivity Sel_2022+
all size_based double_normal_plateau 36 10 0.1 0.1 1

```

## **CASAL Estimation Input File (estimation.csl file)**

```

@estimator Bayes

@max_iters 1600000

@max_evals 10000000

@grad_tol 0.000001

@MCMC
start 0
length 15000000
keep 10000
stepsize 0.01
adaptive_stepsize true
adapt_at 100000 200000 300000 400000
burn_in 500

@profile
parameter initialization.B0

```

n 25  
l 200  
u 1000

@relative\_abundance BMW\_CPUE\_1995-1998  
biomass True  
q BMW\_CPUE\_1995-1998q  
years 1995 1996 1997 1998  
step 1  
proportion\_mortality 0.5  
area In  
ogive Sel\_1995-1998  
1995 1  
1996 0.924284149  
1997 0.920875334  
1998 0.79187112  
cv 0.123184740327152  
dist lognormal  
cv\_process\_error 0

@relative\_abundance BMW\_CPUE\_1999-2021  
biomass True  
q BMW\_CPUE\_1999-2021q  
years 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011  
2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020  
step 1  
proportion\_mortality 0.5  
area In  
ogive Sel\_1999-2021  
1999 0.589227772  
2000 0.743561287  
2001 0.783883873  
2002 0.719375243  
2003 0.752963452  
2004 0.812500274  
2005 0.926850123  
2006 0.82790029  
2007 0.850759098  
2008 0.7784015  
2009 0.747875413  
2010 0.710687412  
2011 0.659810545  
2012 0.496040195  
2013 0.589466768  
2014 0.620326832  
2015 0.653189041  
2016 0.616862476  
2017 0.719768571  
2018 0.740924902  
2019 0.810314963  
cv 0.123184740327152  
dist lognormal  
cv\_process\_error 0  
2020 0.98770542

@proportions\_at BMW\_CatchA  
years 1996 1997 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2007 2009 2011 2013 2015 2017  
2019 2020  
ogive Sel\_BMW\_Gillnet

```

step 2
at_size False
sexed True
area In
sum_to_one True
plus_group True
min_class 2 2
max_class 16 16
ageing_error True
1996 0.0080 0.0139 0.0498 0.1195 0.0100 0.0239 0.0159 0.0100 0.0100
0.0060 0.0199 0.0100 0.0060 0.0020 0.1255 0.0020 0.0040 0.0458 0.0737
0.0179 0.0120 0.0060 0.0159 0.0100 0.0100 0.0020 0.0060 0.0100 0.0040
0.3506
1997 0.0000 0.0135 0.0202 0.0561 0.0448 0.0022 0.0135 0.0135 0.0045
0.0022 0.0090 0.0090 0.0112 0.0022 0.0717 0.0000 0.0135 0.0224 0.0516
0.0359 0.0090 0.0179 0.0224 0.0135 0.0135 0.0202 0.0090 0.0112 0.0090
0.4776
2001 0.0399 0.0869 0.0258 0.0070 0.0423 0.0399 0.0164 0.0164 0.0211
0.0141 0.0047 0.0000 0.0023 0.0070 0.0704 0.0376 0.0775 0.0141 0.0141
0.0493 0.0704 0.0258 0.0141 0.0352 0.0117 0.0070 0.0164 0.0000 0.0070
0.2254
2002 0.0000 0.0799 0.1598 0.0307 0.0164 0.0287 0.0287 0.0307 0.0082
0.0041 0.0041 0.0020 0.0020 0.0041 0.1455 0.0061 0.0738 0.0861 0.0184
0.0225 0.0369 0.0225 0.0102 0.0266 0.0143 0.0020 0.0061 0.0000 0.0041
0.1250
2003 0.0078 0.0611 0.1301 0.1270 0.0172 0.0110 0.0172 0.0125 0.0000
0.0063 0.0031 0.0016 0.0047 0.0047 0.1270 0.0298 0.0517 0.0658 0.0721
0.0141 0.0063 0.0141 0.0204 0.0047 0.0188 0.0094 0.0078 0.0016 0.0031
0.1489
2004 0.0000 0.0574 0.1123 0.1201 0.0339 0.0052 0.0052 0.0209 0.0104
0.0104 0.0052 0.0052 0.0000 0.0078 0.1540 0.0000 0.0261 0.0627 0.0914
0.0392 0.0078 0.0104 0.0261 0.0209 0.0078 0.0078 0.0078 0.0052 0.0000
0.1384
2005 0.0030 0.0332 0.1360 0.0997 0.0574 0.0483 0.0000 0.0000 0.0030
0.0091 0.0030 0.0060 0.0060 0.0000 0.0665 0.0181 0.0302 0.0906 0.0695
0.0695 0.0483 0.0091 0.0060 0.0151 0.0151 0.0091 0.0060 0.0091 0.0121
0.1208
2007 0.0034 0.0304 0.1096 0.0624 0.0961 0.0455 0.0287 0.0185 0.0051
0.0034 0.0034 0.0017 0.0034 0.0000 0.0506 0.0067 0.0202 0.0961 0.0556
0.1046 0.0590 0.0455 0.0253 0.0000 0.0067 0.0152 0.0067 0.0017 0.0034
0.0911
2009 0.0061 0.0334 0.0456 0.0517 0.1003 0.0517 0.0456 0.0304 0.0304
0.0061 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0851 0.0030 0.0091 0.0851 0.0517
0.1185 0.0365 0.0486 0.0152 0.0304 0.0122 0.0030 0.0091 0.0152 0.0061
0.0699
2011 0.0114 0.0598 0.0684 0.0513 0.0484 0.0256 0.0570 0.0171 0.0199
0.0000 0.0057 0.0057 0.0000 0.0028 0.0342 0.0171 0.0399 0.1026 0.0598
0.0399 0.0313 0.0883 0.0342 0.0399 0.0256 0.0228 0.0114 0.0057 0.0114
0.0627
2013 0.0000 0.0248 0.0661 0.1198 0.0579 0.0289 0.0124 0.0083 0.0207
0.0289 0.0041 0.0000 0.0248 0.0000 0.0579 0.0041 0.0248 0.0785 0.1116
0.0413 0.0413 0.0372 0.0413 0.0248 0.0207 0.0372 0.0248 0.0124 0.0041
0.0413
2015 0.0024 0.0315 0.1114 0.0775 0.0702 0.0363 0.0169 0.0121 0.0073
0.0024 0.0121 0.0097 0.0121 0.0097 0.0678 0.0024 0.0266 0.0169 0.0339
0.0508 0.1041 0.0339 0.0291 0.0315 0.0339 0.0145 0.0145 0.0339 0.0169
0.0775
2017 0.0051 0.0633 0.0734 0.0861 0.0380 0.0253 0.0127 0.0228 0.0051
0.0025 0.0051 0.0000 0.0025 0.0025 0.0253 0.0101 0.0152 0.0759 0.1342

```

```

0.0911 0.0405 0.0253 0.0709 0.0278 0.0051 0.0152 0.0051 0.0278 0.0203
0.0658
2019 0.0000 0.0190 0.0840 0.0813 0.0542 0.0298 0.0407 0.0190 0.0081
0.0217 0.0054 0.0081 0.0108 0.0136 0.0759 0.0000 0.0217 0.0352 0.0569
0.0407 0.0813 0.0434 0.0325 0.0244 0.0298 0.0271 0.0163 0.0190 0.0108
0.0894
N_1996 502
N_1997 446
N_2001 426
N_2002 488
N_2003 638
N_2004 383
N_2005 331
N_2007 593
N_2009 329
N_2011 351
N_2013 242
N_2015 413
N_2017 395
N_2019 369
dist multinomial
r 0.00001
N_2020 406
2020 0.0000 0.0271 0.1576 0.1133 0.0591 0.0246 0.0148 0.0197 0.0172
0.0074 0.0172 0.0123 0.0049 0.0049 0.1232 0.0074 0.0099 0.0862 0.0517
0.0542 0.0271 0.0320 0.0222 0.0099 0.0049 0.0049 0.0099 0.0074 0.0099
0.0591

```

```

@ageing_error
type normal
c .05

```

```

@q_method nuisance

```

```

@estimate
parameter q[BMW_CPUE_1995-1998q].q
lower_bound 1e-06
upper_bound 1000
prior uniform

```

```

@estimate
parameter q[BMW_CPUE_1999-2021q].q
lower_bound 1e-06
upper_bound 1000
prior uniform

```

```

@estimate
parameter initialization.B0
lower_bound 10
upper_bound 2000
prior uniform

```

```

@estimate
parameter recruitment.YCS
lower_bound 1 1 1 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001
0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001
0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001 1 1 1
upper_bound 1 1 1 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100
100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 1 1 1

```

