

Fun Fact Sheet: Humphead maori wrasse

Region

North Coast, Gascoyne Coast, Indian Ocean Territories

Summary

Humphead maori wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*) are a large and long-lived species of wrasse that can be found on Indo-Pacific coral reefs in water ranging from 1 to 100 metres depth.

They are very opportunistic predators, preying primarily on crustaceans, molluscs, fish and echinoderms. Humphead maori wrasse are one of the few predators of toxic animals such as the sea hare, boxfish and even crown-of-thorns starfish.

While the males can grow up to 2 m and the females rarely exceed 1 m, it is the females that can live up to 32 years old! (males live a slightly shorter 25 years). Even though the Humphead maori wrasse is long-lived, it has a very slow breeding rate. Individuals become sexually mature at four to six years. Some Humphead maori wrasse change from a female to a male at about nine years old! The factors for this change are not yet known.

Humphead maori wrasse numbers have declined due to a number of threats and are now a completely protected species in Australia.

