

# Stout Whiting (2020)

*Sillago robusta*



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## STOCK STATUS OVERVIEW

Jurisdiction	Stock	Stock status	Indicators
Queensland, New South Wales	Eastern Australia	Sustainable	Standardised CPUE, age composition

## STOCK STRUCTURE

The geographic distribution of the east coast Stout Whiting biological stock is restricted to southern Queensland and northern New South Wales. Genetic analysis of Stout Whiting catches from southern Queensland locations indicate that biological sub-stocks are unlikely to exist [Ovenden and Butcher 1999].

Here, assessment of stock status is presented at the biological stock level—Eastern Australia.

## STOCK STATUS

### Eastern Australia

On average, 80 per cent of the annual commercial catch is taken in Queensland and 20 per cent in New South Wales, with most information being derived from the Queensland fishery. Evidence for the status of Stout Whiting in Queensland waters is therefore used to determine status for the entire biological stock [Hall 2015]. Annual landings of Stout Whiting in Queensland averaged about 715 tonnes (t) for the fishing years 2014–16, increasing to an average 1 065 t from 2017–19 [Wortman 2020]. Maximum harvest in the past 10 fishing years reached 1 170 t in 2010. In Queensland, the annual total allowable commercial catch (TACC) limit for Stout Whiting has been set at 1 106 t since 2017. The annual TAC is reassessed before the start of each fishing year using both commercial catch rate and age and length data in a decision-support model developed in 2002 [O'Neill et al. 2002]. An annual basket TAC (for combined Stout Whiting and Eastern School Whiting, *Sillago flindersi*) was introduced in New South Wales in May 2019 and was initially set at 1 189 t [Hall 2020]. This was reduced to 898 t for the 2020–21 fishing season, in response to some sustainability concerns for the co-caught species, Eastern School Whiting.

Population modelling conducted in 2014 indicated that biomass was marginally above the biomass that would produce MSY [O'Neill and Leigh 2014].

Standardised catch rates for Stout Whiting in Queensland have increased since 2016 to be above the 30-year average [Wortmann 2020]. Similarly, standardised catch rates of Stout Whiting for the prawn trawl fleet of the Ocean Trawl Fishery in northern New South Wales have been relatively stable and above or near the 22-year average since 2006 [Hall 2020]. The above evidence indicates that the biomass of this stock is unlikely to be depleted and that recruitment is unlikely to be impaired.

Fishing pressure for Stout Whiting is effectively constrained by the TACC. Two vessels fished for Stout Whiting since 2013, harvesting an average 1 085 t from Queensland waters, which was approximately 98 per cent of the Queensland annually adjusted TAC [QFISH 2020]. Other than the TACC managed T4 fishing sector, no other sectors are licenced to retain stout whiting that are caught as by-catch. In New South Wales, 59 Ocean Trawl Fishery (OTF) operators landed an estimated 243.2 t of Stout Whiting in 2018–19, following three years of reduced catches that coincided with structural reforms to the fishery [Hall 2018]. The southern extremity of the Stout Whiting distribution overlaps with the northern end of the Eastern School Whiting distribution and reported landings from northern New South Wales are adjusted to account for estimated levels of species misreporting [Hall 2015]. The current level of fishing pressure is unlikely to cause the stock to become recruitment impaired.

On the basis of the evidence provided above, the Eastern Australia biological stock is classified as a **sustainable stock**.

## BIOLOGY

**Stout Whiting biology** [O'Neill et al. 2002]

Species	Longevity / Maximum Size	Maturity (50 per cent)
Stout Whiting	8 years, 230 mm FL	2–3 years, 14–180 mm FL

## DISTRIBUTION



Distribution of reported commercial catch of Stout Whiting

## TABLES

<b>Fishing methods</b>		
	<b>New South Wales</b>	<b>Queensland</b>
<b>Commercial</b>		
Danish Seine		✓
Otter Trawl (Midwater)		✓
Trawl	✓	✓
<b>Recreational</b>		
Hook and Line	✓	

<b>Management Methods</b>		
	<b>New South Wales</b>	<b>Queensland</b>
<b>Commercial</b>		
Catch limits	✓	✓
Effort limits	✓	
Gear restrictions	✓	✓
Limited entry	✓	✓
Spatial closures	✓	✓
Temporal closures		✓
Vessel restrictions	✓	✓
<b>Recreational</b>		
Bag limits	✓	
Gear restrictions	✓	
Licence	✓	
Spatial closures	✓	

<b>Catch</b>		
	<b>New South Wales</b>	<b>Queensland</b>
<b>Commercial</b>	244.132 t	1790.68 t
<b>Indigenous</b>	Unknown	Negligible
<b>Recreational</b>	10 933 fish (1.54 t) of combined school whiting (2017– 18)	Negligible

**Queensland** Queensland reporting period is fishing season (1 January–31 December).

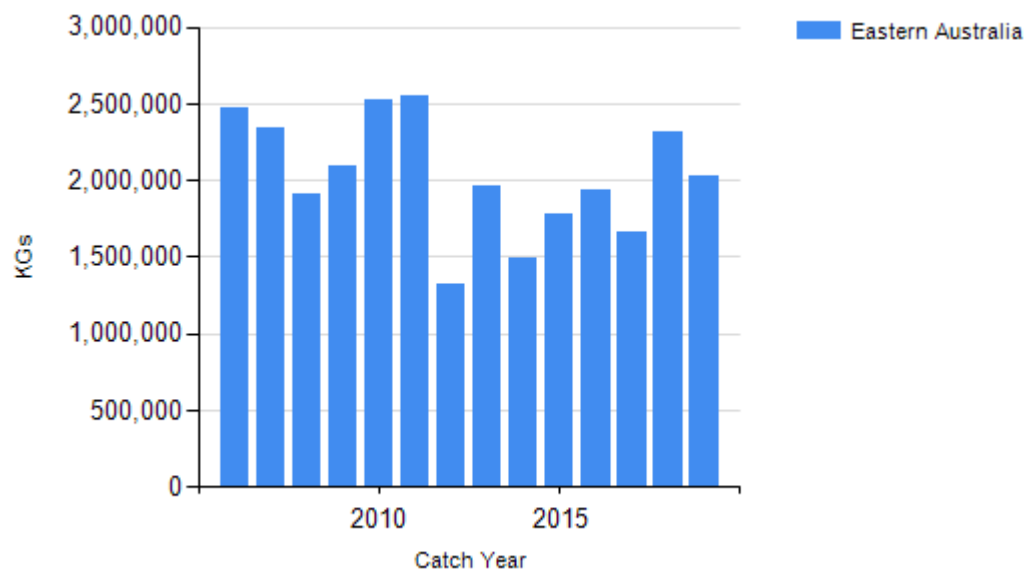
**Queensland – Indigenous (management methods)** for more information see <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/fisheries/traditional-fishing>

**New South Wales** Commercial catch data are for fiscal years. Reported landings from northern New South Wales have been adjusted to account for estimated species misreporting with Eastern School Whiting, *Sillago flindersi* [Hall 2020].

**New South Wales – Recreational (catch totals)** Estimate from Murphy et al. [2020], based on a survey of Recreational Fishing Licence households.

**New South Wales – Indigenous (Management Methods)**  
<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/aboriginal-fishing>.

## CATCH CHART



Commercial catch of Stout Whiting - note confidential catch not shown

References	
Hall 2015	Hall, KC 2015, Stout Whiting ( <i>Sillago robusta</i> ), In: Stewart, J, Hegarty, A, Young, C, Fowler, AM and Craig, J (eds), Status of Fisheries Resources in NSW 2013–14, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Mosman, pp 323–326.
Hall 2018	Hall, KC 2018, Stock status summary and supplementary information 2018 – Ocean Trawl Fishery (Inshore Prawn, Offshore Prawn, Deepwater Prawn and Northern Fish Trawl) – Eastern School Whiting and Stout Whiting ( <i>Sillago flindersi</i> and <i>Sillago robusta</i> ), NSW Department of Primary Industries, Coffs Harbour.
O'Neill et al. 2002	O'Neill, MF, Yeomans, K, Breddin, I, Jebreen, E and Butcher, A 2002, The Queensland stout whiting fishery 1991 to 2002, Fisheries Assessment Report, Queensland Department of Primary Industries, Brisbane.
O'Neill and Leigh 2014	O'Neill, MF and Leigh, GM 2014, Queensland stout whiting fishery: commercial quota setting 2014, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Queensland Government.
Ovenden and Butcher 1999	Ovenden, J and Butcher, A 1999, An investigation of migration and possible stock structuring by stout whiting, <i>Sillago robusta</i> , in southern Queensland waters, and its impact on managing the fishery, final report on the pilot program, Southern Fisheries Centre, Queensland Department of Primary Industries, Brisbane.
QFISH 2020	QFish, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, <a href="http://www.qfish.gov.au">www.qfish.gov.au</a>

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Hall 2020	Hall, KC 2020, Stock status summary and supplementary information 2019 – Ocean Trawl Fishery (Inshore Prawn, Offshore Prawn, Deepwater Prawn and Northern Fish Trawl) – Eastern School Whiting and Stout Whiting ( <i>Sillago flindersi</i> and <i>Sillago robusta</i> ), NSW Department of Primary Industries, Coffs Harbour.
Murphy et al. 2020	Murphy, JJ, Ochwada-Doyle, FA, West, LD, Stark, KE and Hughes, JM, 2020, The NSW Recreational Fisheries Monitoring Program - survey of recreational fishing, 2017/18. Fisheries Final Report Series No. 158.
Wortmann 2020	Wortmann, J 2020, Queensland commercial stout whiting ( <i>Sillago robusta</i> ) fishery: recommended total allowable catch for 2021. Project Report, State of Queensland.