

Standing Committee



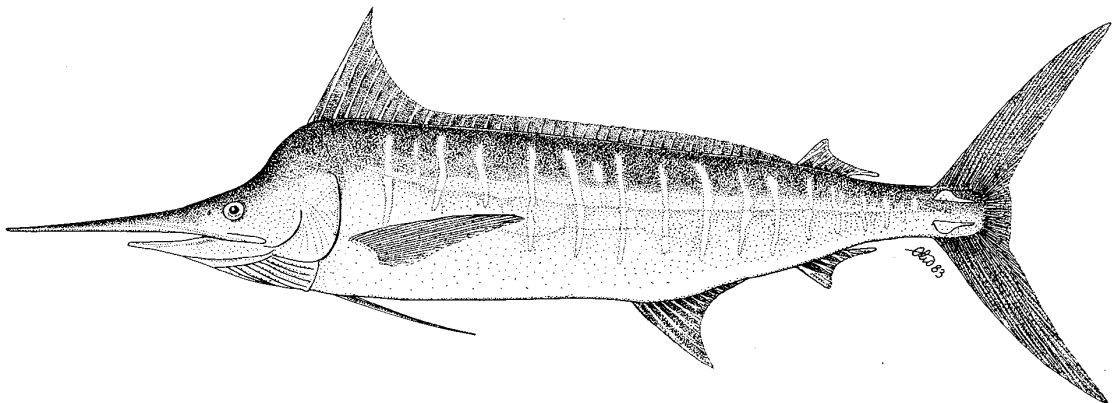
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Working Paper

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Collaborative gamefish data collection

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Collaborative Gamefish Data Collection

Objective:

The intent of this 'session' is to try and qualify what game fishing data is being collected throughout the Pacific, by whom and where it is being archived. It is also hoped that this session may progress a cooperative gamefish data collection and archival framework for the Pacific area, especially the smaller island nations.

Introduction:

Gamefishing is the natural development of recreational fishing from inshore species to the larger pelagic ones. The definition of sport and game fishing varies from place to place. For this report we have defined game fishing as any 'blue water' fishing activity, which is not industrial, or subsistence, but rather is carried out to capture pelagic species for either pleasure and/or food. This includes charter operators, private fishermen and sport and gamefishing clubs.

Gamefishing is presently an effective foreign income earning enterprise for a number of countries in the Pacific and is being developed in many others.

Gamefishing has been practiced for many years, and as such various forms of data have been collected for nearly as long. Some places, like the US, Australia, NZ and other Pacific countries have many years of data residing in various repositories. Some countries have expended a fair amount of energy and resources to try and ensure that this data resides in an appropriate place so that it can be accessed and utilised by relevant scientists and managers. This is to be applauded and it should be stressed that much of the 'enthusiasm and impetus' has come from the relevant recreational fishing organisations. While some countries have been collecting and archiving this data for a long time, this is not the case for many others.

It is hoped that this session will discuss ways to foster the collection of relevant data and ensure that it is archived (on a central data base) so that it can be used to assist in stock assessments, assist in the identification and allocation of resources and to assist the development of gamefishing industries within the Pacific area.

Existing situation

The larger nations such as the US, Australia and NZ have quite extensive gamefishing clubs and data collection protocols, at least within the club system. There is various data archived by the various government departments (not sure to what extent). Many other Pacific countries have various tournament, catch, effort and 'record (largest fish)' data collected. This data sometimes is provided to the relevant government departments, but in many instances it is not, and instead resides within the club structure (usually with the secretary or president). This data may or may not be passed to sequential club committee

members when the incumbents leave the club. As a result much of this valuable historic information may be lost.

Where clubs are part of the International Game Fishing Association (IGFA) some information is forwarded to the central office, but this is mainly just 'country records' i.e. maximum fish weights for line and age classes. Where clubs are not part of IGFA no data is forwarded.

Observation: there is lot of useful data out there that is not being collated, archived or accessible to relevant scientists and managers. It should be noted that any such data collection is entirely voluntary and as such is most probably incomplete.

Discussion points:

- Construct an inventory of existing country data.
- Cooperative efforts be made by relevant gamefishing and research organisations to collect and archive existing data.
- Initiate and promote the future collection of relevant gamefishing data.
- Develop a 'central' data base which is accessible to contributing countries and relevant scientists and managers.

Another problem across the Pacific is that what data is collected is done so in various formats i.e. there is no 'standard' data collection or archiving (this excludes the 'Record' data which is forwarded to IGFA).

Discussion point:

- That clubs be encouraged to collect a 'standard' set of data. This will need to include relevant catch and effort data by species as well as data considered relevant by the individual clubs and organisations.

Summary

There is a large amount of data that is, or could be, collected by the gamefishing fraternity. This data is important in that it can provide information on; catch rates, species compositions, average size, fishery interactions etc. It can also provide information that can be used for tourism research and development.

This is invaluable data which cannot be collected by any government or research organisation. The 'challenge' is to capitilise on the existing efforts that are being undertaken by the gamefishermen and fisheries organisations and to assist in the coordination of these efforts.