



<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/BU0805/S00542.htm>



Paua industry applauds the capture of crime ring

Wednesday, 28 May 2008, 9:53 am

Press Release: Paua Industry Council

28 May 2008

Paua fishing industry applauds the capture of a crime ring of fish thieves

“Paua thieves are costing us millions every year, their selfish greed is threatening the sustainability of paua fisheries and putting the future of this valuable resource at risk” said Paua Industry Council, chief executive Jeremy Cooper after news that the Ministry of Fisheries Operation PAID had broken up a major paua poaching ring.

The legitimate commercial paua fishing industry is the fifth most valuable fishery in New Zealand and is worth around \$50 million a year.

Commercial fishers take care to selectively harvest only a proportion of paua in an area and then move on to make sure that the paua can regenerate.

Fish thieves take no such care, they strip areas of paua with no regard to size limits designed to ensure breeding stock for the future, this makes it hard for the paua to regenerate and it will take an area decades to recover,” said Mr Cooper. “They don’t give a toss at the ecological and biological destruction they leave behind.”

For Sale

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Diver’s entitlement for sale.

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Due to unfavorable west coast weather so far this year, the western catch landed to date is well behind schedule and therefore presents an opportunity for a new entrant to get a good start in Tasmania. Catches from the other zones are also somewhat behind schedule, so overall a keen diver could be busy for the remainder of 2008 and set in place work contacts for next year and beyond.

This licence allows diving in all Tasmanian zones, including the Bass St islands. The variety and of diving conditions and underwater scenery in Tas is fantastic!

Ph Rob Steane - 0418146137

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“The paua fishing industry has worked hard to protect the future of paua fisheries. We have helped fund and support the recent “Poaching is Theft” campaign and work closely with the Ministry of Fisheries to identify and implement measures that we, as an industry, can take to help combat poaching”, he said.

The industry has invested over a million dollars in reseedling programmes, where baby paua are grown in land based paua farms before being out-planted into the wild to grow into adulthood. The aim of this is to boost paua stocks and benefit all paua fishers, including recreational and customary fishers.

“I congratulate the fishery officers for breaking up this criminal gang and can assure the whole hearted support of the paua industry for the government’s aim of stamping out poaching. I hope that the courts will recognise the damage these greedy people are doing to our paua fisheries and the impact on the basic rights of law abiding New Zealanders. We will be hoping for harsh penalties that will act as a deterrent to others.”

Mr Cooper says that anyone who sees suspicious activity should report it to fishery officers by calling 0800 4 POACHER so these thieves can be caught and stopped.

ENDS

<http://tvnz.co.nz/view/page/411365/1801949>

tvnz.co.nz

Paua poaching raids continue

May 28, 2008 9:17 AM

There have been more raids on homes in Wellington as part of New Zealand's biggest fisheries swoop on a blackmarket paua.

Fisheries officers and police swooped on addresses in Auckland, Wellington, Opotiki and Hastings on Tuesday arresting 65 people.

On Wednesday morning they targeted 14 houses in Wellington arresting 10 people and seizing two vehicles.

The people arrested on Tuesday are facing possible jail terms of up to five years or fines of up to \$250,000.

The alleged ringleader of the operation appeared in the Lower Hutt District Court on Tuesday morning.

Hutt Valley takeaway shop owner Saravuthy Mao is facing 12 charges of illegally taking paua under the Fisheries Act 1996.

He has been remanded in custody until June 12.

The maximum penalty for poaching paua is five years in prison or a \$250,000 fine.

Another man has also appeared in the Manukau District Court on similar charges and police are looking to apprehend around 60 others involved in the operation.

A number of those arrested in Auckland will face charges on Friday.

Fisheries says the main catch in the raids was Saravuthy Mao who was allegedly paying members of the Mongrel Mob to dive for the paua and then smuggling most of it overseas and also supplied Asian restaurants in New Zealand.

It is estimated the illegal operation generated an income of more than \$13,000 a week.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/citylife/2008-05/28/content_6718085.htm



Track down Shanghai flavor

(bestfoodinchina.net)

Updated: 2008-05-28 15:15

Famous hotpot restaurant, Hotpot Shanghai, a longtime fixture in an elegant building in Gubei, is rich in antique furniture and artifacts. Tables are roomy and well-dressed, and there are varying sets of chinaware for different dishes.

Abalone has long been appreciated by the Chinese, even regarded as one of eight gastronomic treasures by Ming- and Qing-Dynasty gourmets. Here, it is hotpot with style. Live Australian abalone is cut into thin slices and thrown into a soup base created from expensive ingredients that include duck, seahorse, chicken, and winter melon. The seafood sauce does the abalone justice. Other dishes on the menu are equally exotic, like Kobe beef (tongue), exquisitely marbled and wonderfully tender (the cows are fed on beer); and pork from American black pigs. These are free-range and thus produce tender meat.



Bird's nest and shrimp ball don't rate as exquisite in taste, more in look. Hotpot aside, the restaurant is also famous for sashimi, especially toro and fresh Australian abalone sashimi. Toro sashimi is made from the choicest cut of the tuna belly. Smooth and rich, it seems to have been created in some kind of a god's kitchen.

An impressive wine list that puts many Western restaurants to shame. Cognac, whisky and Chinese sorghum spirits are also available.

Professional and attentive, especially in helping patrons with advice on hotpot dishes.

Hotpot Shanghai
Location: 2378 Jianhe Road
Tel: 62376218

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/story/59078>



Man jailed over abalone breach

27th May 2008 11:05:28 AM

A ST Albans man with 22 previous convictions for abalone theft and related crimes was last week jailed for three years.

Judge Joe Gullaci ordered 15 months of the sentence be suspended, but reminded Tan Truong Nguyen, 49, that any breach of law, even a traffic offence, could see him serve full term.

In handing down the sentence, Judge Gullaci said Nguyen had obviously not learnt any lessons from his previous convictions.

Nguyen and co-offender Van Liet Le of Broadmeadows, pleaded guilty to taking a commercial quantity of abalone from Williamstown in September.

The two men were caught with 539 abalone, 250 of which were under legal size.

Both men have been issued with prohibition orders, forbidding them to handle abalone in any way.

The men also forfeited a van and diving gear.

Fisheries Victoria field services director Michael Hodder said the sentence would help provide a significant deterrent to any others tempted to flout the law.

Mr Hodder urged members of the public to call the 24-hour reporting line, 13 FISH, if they saw any illegal fishing.

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20080526131718605C710238



Three up for abalone poaching

May 26 2008 at 01:36PM

Two Chinese nationals and one Mozambican were arrested for operating an abalone processing facility, the department of environmental affairs and tourism (DEAT) said on Monday.

In a statement, the DEAT said the arrests were made after information was received about the abalone facility operating from a farm in the Paterson district near Addo in the Eastern Cape.

"Abalone drying equipment as well as 10 560 units of dried abalone were seized."

This was the second incident in that area - the first incident occurred in November 2007 and 14 078 units of dried abalone were seized.

In a separate incident, officials also arrested three South Africans at Bushy Park, adjacent to the Sardinia Bay Marine Protected Area near Port Elizabeth, after 400 units of abalone and diving equipment were confiscated. - Sapa

http://www.scienceinpublic.com/2008/Biosecurity_year_feature.htm



Of bats, bugs and men

Lessons for Australia: A biosecurity year in review

Thursday 31 January 2008

Equine 'flu brought biosecurity into focus in 2007. But it wasn't the only issue. Around the world there were a host of issues, new and old.

Avian flu continued its slow march across the globe killing birds and people. England's foot-and-mouth disease outbreak reminded us of the \$10 billion threat foot-and-mouth poses to our livestock and food exports. And at home we dealt with the facial tumour disease of Tasmanian devils, abalone herpes virus, citrus canker and others.

In fact, when you add all these together, 2007 was a big year for biosecurity. And, through the cancellation of race meetings and the impact of equine influenza on the horse industries—from strappers and pony club members, to horse breeders and captains of industry—2007 was a year where biosecurity issues affected the whole community.

Equine 'flu under control

So how did we fare? "It's been a mixed bag really, but probably every major disease response is," says Dr Nigel Perkins, a veterinary epidemiologist who directs the disease surveillance program for the Australian Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre for Emerging Infectious Disease. "We were definitely behind the eight-ball at the time horse 'flu was detected because of the extreme infectiousness of the virus and the level of spread of infection in the days prior to detection." The important thing is that we review everything, so we do better next time."

But, Perkins says, there were some major successes in the war against horse 'flu. "Once the outbreak was discovered, controls on the movement of horses were put in place in a matter of hours. Without a doubt, the rapid response of the departments of primary industry in New South Wales and Queensland ensured the virus did not get into the other states and confined infection to selected regions of affected states, largely those areas where infected horses had been moved to, prior to detection of the outbreak." Subsequent spread of the disease has been successfully confined through a combination of biosecurity measures and vaccination against the virus. Eradication of the outbreak now appears very likely to be successful. "We are now very much at the tail end of the epidemic."

Behind the scenes a new test made things easier. The molecular test for rapid detection of equine influenza was actually developed by CSIRO and the Biosecurity Centre for bird 'flu, but it can also pick up other strains of influenza virus, such as horse 'flu, all within a few hours.

Avian 'flu spreading slowly

As far as avian influenza itself goes, the big story is no story. The situation has not changed much in the past year and that's a worry, according to the Biosecurity Centre's chief executive officer Dr Stephen Prowse. A lowering of the profile of bird 'flu provides breathing space for the virus to mutate making human to human transmission easier. "The longer the problem exists, the higher the risk."

"Avian influenza appears to be endemic in poultry in Asia," says Prowse. "There are still fairly regular reports of human infection and fatalities every two to four weeks, and continued sporadic outbreaks in birds in developed countries. While there hasn't been extensive human to human transmission, almost certainly it has happened in a small number of cases."

The only practical way of controlling the disease, he says, is to vaccinate poultry to reduce the virus load, and to minimise risk factors associated with the virus transmission from poultry to people—particularly in handling, slaughtering and disposing of infected birds. In addition, a vaccine and vaccination strategy for humans is under development.

Such a program needs to involve Indonesia, which at present is withholding crucial samples of the avian influenza virus from the World Health Organisation, and through it, international vaccine developers. Indonesia argues that the virus samples constitute intellectual property, which it won't disclose without guaranteed access to any vaccines developed from it. "The public health risk of avian influenza is a major concern to Western countries," says Prowse, "but it is not such a short-term problem for developing countries where it is a much lesser public health problem than malaria, TB, HIV or dengue fever, for instance."

Aside from the problem of human deaths, avian influenza remains a hugely important threat to the poultry industry. For the past year, the Centre has sponsored programs to monitor wild bird populations in northern Australia to track the presence and behaviour of the disease. It has also joined with the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) in supporting projects on the spread of the virus in South-East Asia, particularly on the part played by wild birds and poultry markets. The CRC has also been building skills and capability through training PhD students from the region.

Nipah virus spreads from person to person

But there is another emerging pathogen, equally virulent, that is beginning to cause concern. While it has not been recorded in Australia, it has a curious connection with this country. It's called Nipah virus. It's harboured and spread by fruit bats and flying foxes, and kills up to 75 per cent of its human victims.

Nipah virus is one of only two members of a recently discovered group closely related to those which cause measles and mumps, the henipaviruses. The first henipavirus, Hendra virus, was discovered in 1994 after the death of a horse trainer and several horses in Queensland. Following the Australian experience and a renewed interest in fruit bats as potential carriers, Nipah virus came to light in Malaysia five years later killing several hundred people associated with commercial pig farming.

Since 2001, outbreaks of Nipah virus have been occurring annually after the monsoon in Bangladesh, but the past couple of years have shown a disturbing change. Previously, to become a threat to humans, the virus had to pass from bats through an intermediate host, usually pigs, in which it multiplied, then to humans. The Bangladesh form can now be transmitted directly to humans, and from human to human.

Because flying foxes have the capability of spreading Nipah virus over a large area, including Australia, the Australian Biosecurity Centre considers it a significant threat as an emerging disease. As yet there is no therapy available to treat the encephalitis it causes. So, last July the Centre organised a forum in Canberra with animal health, public health and wildlife health organisations to review current henipavirus knowledge.

So far, they've developed novel tests for the presence of henipaviruses in host animals, and have been involved in several collaborative projects with international research groups to assess the risk of Nipah virus spreading to Australia. The forum identified significant knowledge gaps and recommended priorities for research into the ecology of henipaviruses.

A deadly new threat

A third emerging virus causing much discussion is chikungunya. This mosquito-borne virus was originally identified in Tanzania in the early 50s. It causes fever and severe joint pain but, until recently, had only been associated with sporadic outbreaks and rarely with death.

Since 2005, however, chikungunya virus seems to have changed its behaviour with significant outbreaks in southern India and Sri Lanka. In 2006 a third of the population on the French island of Réunion in the Indian Ocean was infected— over 250,000 people. Over 200 people died.

Last August and September, 160 cases of chikungunya virus were reported from northern Italy, around Ravenna. Eight cases have been reported in travellers to Australia.

The virus appears to have mutated to become more virulent. And it is now known to be carried by more species of mosquito than previously thought — particularly the Asian tiger mosquito, which is also spreading worldwide.

“We are investigating if Australian mosquitoes can also transmit the chikungunya virus and whether we can distinguish it from Ross River virus,” says Prof John MacKenzie, deputy CEO of the Centre. MacKenzie is organising a national meeting on the threat of chikungunya in mid-February.

A problem for Australia, he says, is that chikungunya is so closely related to the endemic Ross River virus that the present diagnostic tests may have difficulty distinguishing between the two. A further complication of diagnosis is that dengue fever, also found in north Queensland but from a completely different group of viruses, produces similar symptoms.

Pushing back the foot-and-mouth threat

As seen with horse 'flu, exotic diseases do not have to kill or debilitate people to cause a lot of damage, particularly economic damage. An important part of the history of Australian agriculture has been the battle against diseases that lower the quality or yield of crops or livestock. A classic example has been foot-and-mouth disease (FMD).

Australia's FMD-free status is a major trading advantage for our meat and livestock products. But it's hardly a reason for complacency. In 2007, the UK suffered its second outbreak of FMD in six years. The 2001 outbreak originated from swill feeding at a pig farm in northern England. But the 2007 outbreak was an “own goal”, traced to a sewage leak at England's major FMD research facility.

While FMD problems in the UK pose less risk to Australia, according to Prof John Edwards, dean of the vet school at Murdoch University in Perth, we need to keep an eye on FMD in South-East Asia.

“Australia has in place very good quarantine arrangements, and that's the reason why we've been able to remain foot-and-mouth free for the past 140 years,” he says. “But the dramatic growth in international travel and trade between Asia and Australia increases the risk. Our biosecurity would be very much enhanced if we eradicated FMD to our north.”

Edwards is a former director of the South-East Asia FMD program. He says the disease has been eradicated in the Philippines and Indonesia in the past two years, but has been spreading in Malaysia and Vietnam. The Australian Biosecurity Centre, of which Murdoch University is a supporting partner, has been jointly funding PhD scholarships to allow students from South-East Asia to develop skills by undertaking projects that track the disease and its economic consequences, and so assist with organising eradication programs.

Another bad year for devils

Another biosecurity problem with very different economic consequences is the Tasmanian devil facial tumour disease. In the past two years, studies at the University of Tasmania and the University of Sydney have confirmed the condition to be an infective cancer transmitted through biting, says Dr Steven Smith, manager of the Tasmanian Government's Save the Tasmanian Devil program.

“The researchers have also found that the immune system of the devils does not recognise tumour cells from other devils as alien and is not triggered by them. There is a lack of genetic diversity in the devil population. They are all susceptible to the disease. We can't stop devils moving through the bush and biting each other, so there is little we can do to stop the disease spreading in Tasmania, and it is moving steadily westward.”

While further research on the genetic makeup of the devils may lead to clues for vaccination or treatment, Smith says, there's no guarantee. The only way of ensuring the survival of the Tasmanian devil is to establish disease-free populations from which the animals can be re-introduced.

“The program must be larger than any captive breeding program in the world — about 1500 animals. We only have the capacity to hold 400 to 500 in captivity at the moment. They are solitary animals and very expensive to keep in captivity.”

The Commonwealth Government has already pledged \$10 million over five years and the Tasmanian Government is also working on a five-year budget. It is hoped to attract corporate sponsors to support the program. After all, the Tasmanian devil is one of the best known cartoon characters in the world.

Abalone and lemon

There have been plenty of other biosecurity battles over the past year. Two areas where measures appear to be working are in aquaculture and the citrus industry. In late 2005, a herpes virus was first detected in four abalone farms in Victoria's Western District. It was a blow to an emerging abalone aquaculture business, which is beginning to generate millions of dollars in exports.

The farms voluntarily went into quarantine. Their stock was removed. They have been completely repopulated from clean sources, and the abalone aquaculture industry is moving on. That's the good news. Unfortunately the story does not end there.

The virus is now being picked up in wild populations around the reefs of south-western Victoria and appears to be expanding its range, says Dr Andrew Cameron, Victoria's deputy chief veterinary officer. “We are developing a DNA test and protocols to gain a better understanding of what is going on in the wild.” Attempts have been made to limit accidental human spread in the wild population by banning the taking of abalone in areas where the disease is known to exist, and by harvesting abalone along the apparent edge of distribution, in an attempt to develop the marine equivalent of a fire break.

Citrus trees are now being replanted around Emerald in central Queensland, after a nasty brush with the bacterial disease citrus canker, which causes unsightly lesions and reduces fruit quantity and quality. Australia's citrus industry is worth more than \$400 million annually, about half in exports.

After initial detection in mid-2004, an eradication program involving the destruction of about 500,000 citrus trees swung into action. The Emerald area has been disease-free since the beginning of 2006, and replanting began last July.

Declare it for Australia

While biosecurity may sound like something out of James Bond, it rarely if ever involves secret agents or terrorists. Biosecurity, and the research that underpins it, is an essential part of protecting the lives and livelihoods of Australians.

But it's worth remembering that we, the travelling public still pose the greatest threat to our nation's biosecurity. In 2007 4,100 people were fined for serious breaches of quarantine. Ten times that number were cautioned. And twelve tonnes of poultry meat, eggs and feathers were confiscated. Any of this material could have brought avian influenza to Australia.

Written by Tim Thwaites

Science in Public for the Australian Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre

29 January 2007

Links

<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/BU0805/S00538.htm>



Council supports Govt on approach to paua thieves

Tuesday, 27 May 2008, 5:14 pm

Press Release: Seafood Industry Council

27 May 2008

New Zealand Seafood Industry Council supports Government's approach on paua thieves

The seafood industry congratulates all those responsible for bringing fish thieves to justice, said Owen Symmans, chief executive of the New Zealand Seafood Industry Council.

"The major paua poaching ring broken today shows government is very serious about poachers. This crime affects every New Zealander."

Fish thieves are stealing from all New Zealanders and jeopardising the future of a carefully managed fishery, he said.

The industry supports government in its approach to fish theft, Mr Symmans said.

The joint Government "Poaching is Theft" initiative is focused on encouraging people to report suspicious or illegal activity by contacting 0800 4 POACHER.

ENDS

Arrests in paua poaching bust

May 27, 2008 6:57 PM



The Mongrel Mob and dozens of Asian restaurateurs have been raided and arrested in the New Zealand's biggest fisheries investigation into blackmarket paua.

The Ministry of Fisheries has carried out raids on homes throughout the North Island on Tuesday morning. More than 130 Fishery Officers supported by around 70 police raided addresses in Auckland, Wellington, Opotiki and Hastings.

MFish spokesman Shaun Driscoll says around 65 people have been arrested in relation to over 300 charges.

Weight belts, flippers and bottles attached to bags used to float the paua to the surface, are some of the gear seized in the raids.

Also seized were bags of underweight paua, 34 cars, and thousands in cash from the homes of Mongrel Mob gang members and some of the owners of Auckland and Wellington's finest Asian restaurants.

Altogether, officers seized paua worth \$1.34 million in the commercial market.

"The theft of paua is a direct attack on the rights and natural heritage of all law abiding New Zealanders. It is a criminal enterprise motivated entirely by greed, targeting paua stocks which are easily accessible," he says.

Fisheries say a kingpin Asian businessman based in Wellington was paying the Mongrel Mob to dive for the paua on Wellington's south coast. Then he supplied restaurants in Auckland and Wellington but most of the haul was headed offshore.

"It would generate an income for him in excess of \$13,000 a week and as much as 7000 dollars for his divers," says Driscoll.

It's alleged that some of those arrested had also been previously busted in Operation Pacman in 2000.

"With the Pacman break in 2002 it was Chinese businessman. Now it's Vietnamese and Cambodian so it's starting to tell a story," says Jeremy Cooper, Paua Industry Council Ltd.

The raids come after a year-long operation targeting the organised poaching, sale and distribution of paua from the Wellington region.

The operation involved an undercover officer who was able to purchase over nine tonnes of paua. The paua was then on-sold to a number of buyers who either distributed the illegal paua into the domestic market or on-sold it to high level dealers involved in domestic and export distribution.

Fisheries believe the poaching network is co-ordinated by a Wellington based criminal who has been trading as much as one tonne of paua a week.

"The people involved in paua poaching rings like this are seasoned criminals, often members or associates of gangs, who are often involved in other criminal activity," says Driscoll.

The illegal paua trades are costing New Zealand millions.

If convicted the 65 caught up in fisheries net can be fined up to \$250,000 or jailed for five years.

Source: ONE News/Newstalk ZB

<http://www.newswire.ca/en/releases/archive/May2008/23/c3862.html>



Attention News Editors:

Tofino man receives jail sentence for contravening a diving prohibition

TOFINO, BC, May 22 /CNW/ - DFO enforcement activities have led to the arrest and conviction of a Tofino man for unlawfully possessing scuba diving equipment contrary to a prohibition order. On March 13, 2008, Gilgamesh Derick Palm was sentenced in Port Alberni Provincial Court to 60 days in jail, and received an additional two year snorkeling and scuba diving prohibition, after pleading guilty to contravening an Order of Prohibition made under Section 79.6 of the Fisheries Act.

After his second conviction for possession of Northern abalone in 2001, Mr. Palm was given an eight year Order of Prohibition, which prohibited him from engaging in snorkeling or scuba diving activities. In March of 2008, fishery officers determined that he was in contravention of the order, as he was in possession of scuba diving equipment.

Abalone fisheries have been closed in British Columbia since December 1990, due to serious conservation concerns. In 1999, Northern abalone were declared a threatened species under the Species at Risk Act (SARA). Killing, harming, harassing, capturing or taking abalone is prohibited under SARA, which aims to prevent endangered and threatened wildlife from becoming extinct or lost from the wild, and to help in the recovery of these species. Despite these efforts, one of the largest threats to Northern abalone survival in the wild is continued unauthorized harvest. Surveys of Northern abalone, including areas accessible only to remote communities, show no sign of recovery.

DFO acts to end illegal fishing activity. As part of this work, the Department is asking the general public for information on activities of this nature or any contravention of the Fisheries Act and Regulations. Anyone with information can call the toll-free violation reporting line at 1-800-465-4336.

For further information: Lara Sloan, Communications Advisor, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, (604) 666-0903



Fishery gangs: ones that get away

Jordan Baker Chief Police Reporter
May 26, 2008

MUD crabs, prawns and barramundi are among prized species being targeted by organised crime groups to fuel an illicit domestic seafood market.

Thieves - including bkie gangs - are moving beyond abalone and shark fin to native and coral fish, oysters, eel, sea cucumbers, sea urchins and seahorses, a study by the Australian Institute of Criminology warns.

National parks in NSW are exploited by illegal divers and families using the guise of indigenous hunting. The families are "reputed to be well organised, with half a dozen groups working on the coast in specific areas", the report says.

The chief targets in NSW are oysters, eels and deep-sea species such as tuna. Aquaculture farms are also victims. The main tactics are sending illicit catch to legitimate processors in Sydney and Queensland, and stealing other people's catches.

Oyster theft is so well organised that thieves use lifting equipment on vehicles to steal whole racks from farms, the report says.

Outlaw motorcycle gangs are infiltrating the industry in some states. Bikies are believed to have been involved in pearl theft in Western Australia, the trading of fishing licences in the Northern Territory and abalone poaching in South Australia.

While the main market for abalone and shark fin is Hong Kong, there is "an extensive illicit Australian market for these other species", the report says. "The market includes clubs, restaurants, hotels, fish and chip shops."

The study was prompted by research showing there had been growth in organised crime involving abalone and rock lobster, and an increase in criminals using the industry to launder money and make drugs at aquaculture farms.

The criminology institute produced the report with the Australian Crime Commission to estimate the extent to which organised crime put existing or proposed fisheries at risk.

Demand and better fishing techniques have increased the threat to fragile fishing industries such as Australia's.

Half the fisheries officers interviewed by researchers said their jurisdiction was ineffective in dealing with crime. Many believed punishments were inadequate.

Prosecution data shows that many matters were undefended. Most attracted minor fines, and only a small fraction resulted in a serious penalty. In Queensland, 51 per cent of fines were less than \$500.

The report says the recreational sector provides the best cover for organised crime. Some fishermen used secret compartments in boats or mixed legal and illegal catch, and a few earned extra money from illegal drugs.

No public estimates are available of illegally obtained fish in the domestic black market.

<http://www.canada.com/vancouvernews/news/westcoastnews/story.html?id=bb7b9e95-129d-4c78-a88b-d8e3df9cb5a5>

Abalone poacher gets jail time

Vancouver Sun

Published: Saturday, May 24, 2008

A man convicted of poaching endangered abalone has been convicted for illegally possessing scuba diving equipment, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans said Friday in a press release.

Gilgamesh Derick Palm of Tofino was sentenced in Port Alberni Provincial Court to 60 days in jail, and received an additional two-year snorkelling and scuba diving prohibition, after pleading guilty, the release said.

After his second conviction for possession of northern abalone in 2001, Palm was given an eight-year order of prohibition, which prohibited him from engaging in snorkelling or scuba diving activities, the release said.

Abalone fisheries have been closed in B.C. since 1990, due to conservation concerns. In 1999, northern abalone were declared a threatened species under the Species at Risk Act. Killing, harming, harassing, capturing or taking abalone is prohibited, the release said.

Despite these efforts, the DFO claims one of the largest threats to northern abalone survival in the wild is continued unauthorized harvest.

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http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=nw20080520182334151C365163



Syndicate 'mastermind' to appear in court

May 20 2008 at 07:04PM

The alleged mastermind of a perlemoen smuggling syndicate will appear in the Kempton Park regional court on Wednesday, said the South African Revenue Service (SARS).

A customs clearing agent, the 51-year-old man handed himself over to the police last week, SARS spokesman Adrian Lackay said on Tuesday.

The charges against him related to customs officials' seizure of 1,4 tons of dried perlemoen, worth an estimated R4,2 million, at the OR Tambo International Airport in April.

The perlemoen had been destined for Hong Kong and was misdeclared on export documentation, said Lackay.

The man appeared to have been involved in perlemoen smuggling for a long time and his arrest was thought to have dealt a serious blow to this illegal industry, he said. - Sapa



Syndicates, firearms and cash: Abalone poaching out of control on Far South Coast

15/05/2008 8:51:00 AM

Abalone poaching on the Far South Coast has been linked with organised crime this week and industry and police state that penalties in New South Wales simply aren't enough to deter poachers and protect the multi-million dollar export industry.

Repeat offenders, some armed with loaded firearms or homemade weapons and knives, are on the increase, prompting those involved in the prevention of illegal fishing to speak publicly about the threat of organised crime syndicates to the safety of officers and the sustainability of the industry.

Calls from industry and Water Police to change Fisheries offences to indictable offences, would thereby enable offenders to fall under wider jurisdictions of punishment and go some way to addressing illegal drug manufacture and other organised crime.

Two major busts occurred last week, one just hours after Fisheries officers appeared in Eden Local Court on Wednesday for two unrelated abalone cases, one which included an alleged loaded firearm.

While driving back from court, Fisheries investigator Nick Schroder passed a southbound car and recognised persons in the car as members of a suspected abalone poaching syndicate.

Surveillance was initiated and the men were apprehended at Bittangabee Bay, south of Eden, with 641 shucked abalone worth about \$9000 on the legitimate market and a quantity of diving gear.

Shucked abalone die without the protection of their shell.

A court date was yet to be set but it was expected that 12 charges would be laid with a maximum penalty of \$11,000 and three months' jail.

Further north at Moon Bay, Tathra two alleged abalone thieves were caught with 202 shucked abalone worth about \$3000 on the legitimate market.

One had an "extensive history" of abalone theft in four states and was released on bail on Monday, May 5 with strict conditions.

The men, aged 38 and 32-years-of-age, from Lansvale and Cronulla, were arrested and charged in relation to seven offences under the Fisheries Management Act.

Fisheries investigator Mr Schroder and Fisheries officer Michael Kirwin operate from Merimbula's state-wide operations and investigations group and are often assisted by Eden's Fisheries officers and police.

Following the week of high activity stakeholders within the abalone industry and Water Police have again voiced concerns that the penalties for fisheries offences are not enough to deter poachers.

Industry representative Duncan Worthington said that Fisheries officers were doing a great job and needed more help.

"Unfortunately despite the best effort of the fisheries officers in NSW they're still just not able to address the scale of this crime in NSW."

In all other states, Fisheries offences are indictable.

For example, last Wednesday at Eden Local Court in one of two abalone related cases, a known poacher was charged \$2070 for four abalone related Fisheries offences, including obstructing Fisheries offences.

By comparison, this week in South Australia, where abalone related offences are an indictable offence, two Adelaide men were each charged more than \$15,000 for almost identical charges, excluding obstructing a Fisheries officer.

According to industry statistics, those two fines totalling \$30,000 far exceed the total fines of \$12,000 accrued in New South Wales this year.

The Abalone Council Australia wrote to the Minister of Primary Industries Ian McDonald on April 14 stating serious concerns that, in comparison to other states, New South Wales was lacking in "appropriate penalties" for those convicted under the state's legislation.

Sergeant Jim Hinckley of Eden Water Police also said that poachers in New South Wales have changed since recreational catch limits were imposed of a possession limit of two abalone of at least 11.5 centimetres per person and was often linked to organised crime.

He was one of many who believed that poaching abalone was a way participants in organised crime raised money for their illegal activities, particularly those who have completed jail terms.

"Is an armed robber or a convicted felon just feeding his family?" he asked.

"Abalone poaching involves a high value crop and what we've found over the years that there is an increased level of organisation in the collection and distribution of the product and it fits all the criteria of organised crime," he said.

"In all other states where abalone is a commercial industry the offences pertaining to its illegal harvest are an indictable offence.

"I don't believe fines are an adequate deterrent due to the increased number of offences occurring."

Abalone industry snapshot:

- Fisheries officers have now seized over 9000 abalone this financial year to date.
- More than 1900 penalty infringement notices have been issued and initiated 400 prosecutions.
- Industry estimates up 130 or 140 tonnes per year illegally caught, with beach prices of \$30 to \$40 per kilogram -that's a \$5 million a year illegal industry.
- 2006: Eight prison sentences.
- 2007: One prison sentence.
- Industry says 22 successful abalone prosecutions this year generated \$12,000 and says it is far less than the commercial value of the product.

- In South Australia recently, two abalone poachers were fined \$15,000 each.
- Commercial abalone quotas dropped from 300 tonnes to 100 tonnes a year.
- Recreational bag limits dropped from 10 to two.

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=14&art_id=vn20080513110754195C247621



Poaching figures skyrocket in South Africa's



John Yeld

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Poaching levels in the Table Mountain National Park have rocketed, with 8 665 poached marine species confiscated by rangers last year, nearly double the 2006 figure of 4 578 and almost triple the 3 378 in 2005.

The Kruger National Park, South Africa's flagship conservation area, has also been heavily targeted by poachers, with at least 44 white rhinos and 31 buffaloes among the 249 animals found killed over the past four years.

Fears have been expressed that poaching levels are substantially higher in the country's network of 22 national parks, as these figures only reflect species found in known or reported poaching incidents.

For example, it is known that illegal fishing in the Tsitsikamma National Park has been an issue for many years, but this park has reported zero poaching since 2004.

The numbers were revealed by Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk in response to a parliamentary question by DA environmental spokesperson Gareth Morgan, who asked for a breakdown of species poached in each national park over the past four years.

The Table Mountain National Park did not report which individual species had been poached, but the close to 9 000 are understood to be mostly perlemoen and West Coast rock lobster.

Animals, mostly mammals, poached in Kruger also include elephant (two), lion (four), kudu, warthog, impala, waterbuck, hyena, reedbuck, crocodile, nyala, bushbuck, zebra and steenbok.

The Greater Addo Elephant National Park near Port Elizabeth confirmed poaching of kudu, bushbuck, bush pig, warthog, common duiker, porcupine and perlemoen, but did not give figures.

The Knysna National Park reported perlemoen and tree ferns as poached items, while the Wilderness National Park also didn't give numbers but recorded poaching of octopus and four genera of oyster species.

The Mountain Zebra National Park near Cradock reported one mountain reedbeek and one aardwolf poached in 2004, while there were 22 unspecified losses to poachers in the newly established Camdeboo National Park near Graaff Reinet last year.

The 15 other parks reported zero losses, something Morgan described as "hard to believe".

He confirmed that the figures showed a "meaningful drop" in poached species in the Kruger National Park last year, 55, compared with 91 in 2006, but said that numbers remained "disturbingly high", especially for white rhino.

Morgan said it was difficult to analyse the poaching statistics "meaningfully".

"On the one hand, the Kruger figures might be much higher, as rangers can only determine these figures when there is some evidence of an animal having been illegally killed.

"On the other hand, Kruger's figures may be high compared with other parks, which almost all report no poaching at all, (just) because Kruger has the ability to monitor poaching while the majority of the parks do not."

Referring to the Table Mountain National Park figures, Morgan said these were "extraordinarily high".

"The figure increased over each of the past three years to 8 665 in 2007. Once again, this figure is probably only reflective of poached species that have been recovered by rangers, and so the actual figure is certainly higher."

Morgan said he intended submitting follow-up questions.

"It will be important to determine whether the parks have sufficient anti-poaching personnel and whether there are vacant posts," he said.

"The species protected by SA National Parks belong to all the citizens of South Africa and form part of important ecosystems, and it is incumbent on them to work to reduce these levels of poaching."

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