

Identity crisis over Tommy ruff and salmon

Another helpful tip from our Fisheries Officers

By Mel Snart

While patrolling the southern Eyre Peninsula, it is common for Fisheries Officers to see recreational anglers catching what they believe to be Tommy ruff (*Arripis georgianus*).

However, when we take a closer look, the catch may actually be juvenile salmon (*Arripus truttaceus*), which are commonly known as salmon trout. The scientific names indicate that both are from the same genus *Arripus*. This means they are very similar in many respects and are, in fact, genetic cousins.

Salmon grow to be quite large and are commonly caught at 3 to 4 kg. At this size, they become a prized fish.

It is important that recreational fishers correctly identify a juvenile salmon from a Tommy ruff.



The easy reference guide indicates the salmon is the top fish

By mistaking these fish, and removing juvenile salmon from our system, extra pressure is placed on fish stocks and, ultimately, somebody may miss out on the opportunity to catch the larger salmon.

Recreational fishers also need to be aware that there is a minimum size limit of 21cm for salmon, whereas no size limit applies for Tommy ruffs.

It is important that you adhere to the regulations, or you might find yourself liable for prosecution under the Fisheries Act.

Remember, the onus is on you to know your fish.

It is not all doom and gloom though. There are some basic distinguishing features to help you identify salmon from Tommy ruff. Here is a quick and easy guide:

- salmon have smaller eyes than Tommy ruff,
- salmon have a yellow pectoral fin with a black dot on the base of the pectoral fin,
- Tommy ruff have a distinctive black tip on their tail, whereas salmon do not,
- the scales on salmon are smooth when you run your finger from the tail to the head. The scales on Tommy ruff are noticeably rough.



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Tommy ruff have a bag limit of 60 fish per day and a boat limit of 180 fish per day. Salmon have a bag limit of 20 fish per day and a boat limit of 60 per day for fish between 21cm and 35cm, and 10 fish per day with a boat limit of 30 fish per day for salmon 35cm and over.

Next time you catch a Tommy, take a closer look to see if you have caught an elusive salmon!

Mel Snart is a Fisheries Officer based in Port Lincoln where she works with the recreational fishing community in

education, awareness and compliance. She also assists the commercial industry to improve and regulate the wide range of professional fisheries based in the region.

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