



MEDIA RELEASE

Twenty Groupers Threatened With Extinction

Leading Territory scientist Dr Barry Russell believes the recent International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Assessment workshop in Hong Kong will go a long way to conserving grouper fish species that are commercially under threat.

Dr Russell, Assistant Director at the Museum and Art Gallery of the NT, said last month's groundbreaking workshop was the first time the panel of 20 scientific experts from 10 different countries had met to assess threats to these species under IUCN criteria, and consider what action is needed to ensure their continued survival.

"The conclusion from the workshop is that 20 species of grouper, a globally important group of 162 food fishes, are threatened with extinction unless management and conservation measures are introduced," Dr Russell said.

"While these species of grouper are not yet threatened in Australian waters, the workshop provided a global perspective of what pressures these fish are facing.

"A huge threat comes from Hong Kong's and southern China's insatiable appetite for these fishes and resulting high prices, with some fish even imported live by air from as far away as the south Pacific and Indian Ocean.

"Groupers are the basis of the multi-million dollar live reef fish market of the seafood trade centred in Hong Kong, where consumers can pay up to US\$50 per kilogram for this delicacy.

"In South-East Asia fishing is not only directed towards adults, but millions of juveniles are also targeted annually to supply the aquaculture industry.

"Many groupers also aggregate to spawn and these spawning aggregations are targeted by fishermen, putting the species further at threat."

Dr Russell said "the workshop has for the first time, identified the threats and management priorities for each grouper species on a global scale".

He said the threatened grouper species will be added to the IUCN Red List.

"The Red List is recognised and respected worldwide as the most comprehensive source of information on the global conservation status of plant and animal species, and is widely used as a tool for measuring and monitoring changes in the status of biodiversity and the conservation of threatened species," Dr Russell said.

"It is hoped that as a major outcome of the workshop, governments worldwide will realise the extent of the global threat to groupers and put in place effective measures for the management and conservation of these important food fishes."

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Media Note – For more information contact Dr Barry Russell on 8999 8245

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