

Decapterus macarellus (Mackerel Scad)

Family: Carangidae (Jacks and Pompanos)

Order: Perciformes (Perch and Allied Fish)

Class: Actinopterygii (Ray-finned Fish)



Fig. 1. Mackerel scad, *Decapterus macarellus*.

[<http://biogeodb.stri.si.edu/sfstep/en/pages/random/4217> downloaded 25 October 2016]

TRAITS. The mackerel scad, *Decapterus macarellus*, is an elongate, cylindrical shaped fish. Its body colour is black to bluish green above, while below it is silvery. There is a small black blotch at the back edge of the operculum (gill cover) (Fig. 1). The caudal fin ranges in colour from reddish to yellow-green (Randall, 1996). Growth does not differ between females and males, with a common length of 30cm and weight of about 1kg, and maximum recorded length of 46cm (Jiménez Prado and Béarez, 2004). There are 9 dorsal spines, 31-37 dorsal soft rays, 3 anal spines and 27-31 anal soft rays. The lateral line forms a long, low arch anteriorly. The scales on top of the head extend forward to the anterior margin of the pupil. The mackerel scad has a slender tail base, and a deeply forked caudal (tail) fin.

DISTRIBUTION. Widespread over most of the world's tropical seas (Fig. 2), with the exception of being uncommon in the Gulf of Mexico (Cervigón, 1993).

HABITAT AND ECOLOGY. Adult mackerel scad prefer clear oceanic water around islands. They are marine-only fish, occasionally found near the surface, but generally at depths between 40-200m. They are categorized as coastal pelagic fish, spending their life between two marine habitats; coral reefs and open-ocean. The mackerel scad feeds predominantly on small fish, zooplankton and crustaceans in the water column, and is active both day and night.

REPRODUCTION. The juvenile fish grow inshore, and after 2 years they are mature and form adult schools, at a size of about 26cm. They spawn hundreds of thousands of pelagic eggs that hatch into pelagic larvae, free-floating in the open sea. The spawning period occurs from April to July.

BEHAVIOUR. They are found in large, fast moving schools (groups) along reef boundaries near deep water (Fig. 3). The school is an adaptation for avoiding predators as it appears to increase the animal's apparent size and visibility (Fig. 4).

APPLIED BIOLOGY. The mackerel scad is predominately used as bait, as larger gamefish such as snappers and groupers are known to feed on the species. It is an important element of fisheries. There are no major threats to this species and therefore there are no conservation procedures in place for this particular species, and it is listed as Least Concern, according to the IUCN (2016).

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Author: Shanika Ramlochan

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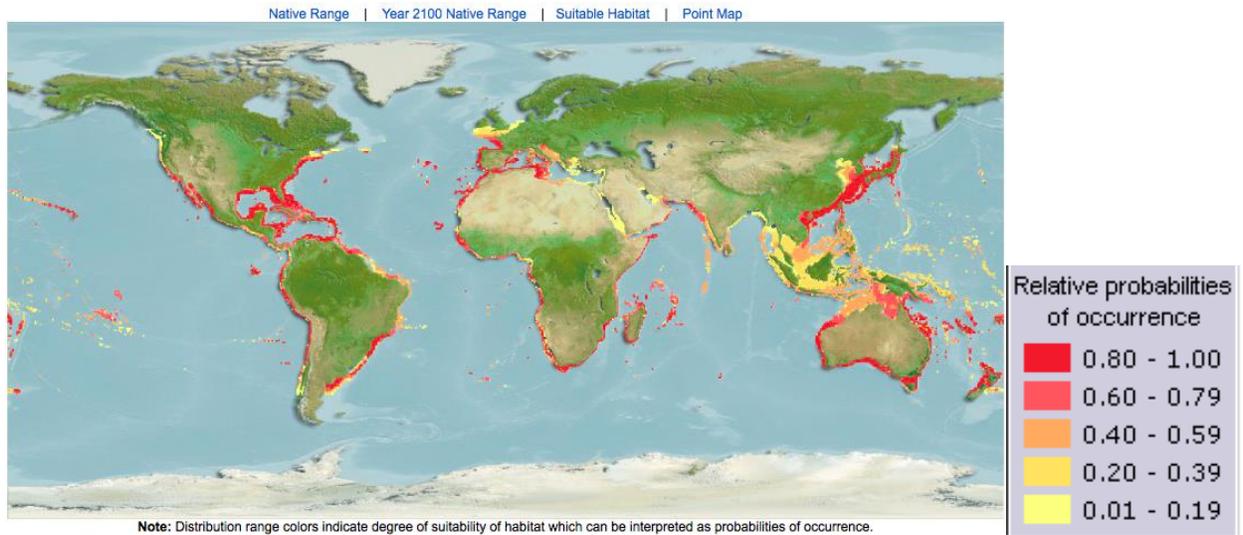


Fig. 2. Mackerel scad geographic distribution.

[http://www.aquamaps.org/receive.php?type_of_map=regular, downloaded 26 October 2016]



Fig. 3. School of mackerel scad.

[<http://fishesofaustralia.net.au/home/species/4270>, downloaded 26 October 2016]



Fig. 4. Great white shark scatters school of mackerel scad.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Great_white_shark_scatters_mackerel_scad.jpg, downloaded 26 October 2016]

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