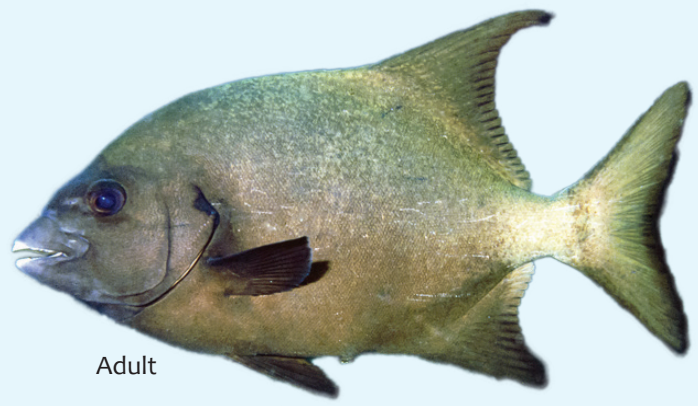




Juvenile



Adult

## FACT SHEET

### Natal Knifejaw

*Oplegnathus robinsoni*

**Family:** Oplegnathidae

**Other common names:** Cuckoo bass, Natalse kraaibek

#### Description

Deep bodied with a high second dorsal fin and a parrot-like beak. Body is overall grey-brown to dark brown in colour and may be mottled. Juveniles are bright yellow with several vertical black bars along the body from eye to tail.

#### Distribution

Endemic, known mainly from southern Mozambique and KwaZulu-Natal waters but common in the Pondoland MPA in the Eastern Cape and juveniles seen as far south as Tsitsikamma. The Mozambique knifejaw (*Oplegnathus pealopesi*) may simply be a large Natal knifejaw.

#### Habitat

Adults are found on inshore coral and rocky reefs in depths of 10-100 m. Small yellow and black juveniles are pelagic in currents, commonly found under floating objects at sea, while slightly larger juveniles are found on shallow subtidal reefs.

#### Feeding

Diet includes ascidians, soft corals and other reef-encrusting organisms.

#### Movement

Little known, thought to be a resident species.

## Reproduction

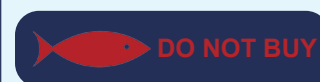
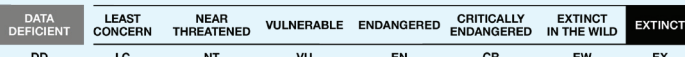
They reach maturity after 36 cm fork length. Spawning takes place in summer (October to January) and is thought to occur throughout their distribution range.

## Age and growth

They can reach a maximum size of 60 cm total length and a weight of 3 kg. They have been aged to a maximum of 10 years.

## Current status

The Natal knifejaw stock has not been assessed and little is known about their current status. However, long-term records of a single competitive spearfisher indicate significant decline in catch per unit effort recorded off Ballito and Scottburgh on the KwaZulu-Natal coast between 1989-97 and 2002-07 despite a predicted increase for tropical species due to climate change and increased water temperature. They have not been evaluated on the IUCN Red List. South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) List: Red.



## Capture

This is an important target species for spearfishers in KwaZulu-Natal. They are occasionally (but rarely) taken on line.

## Current recreational fishing regulations

**Daily bag limit:** 5 per person per day

**Minimum size limit:** None

**Closed Season:** None

**Other regulations:** No sale recreational species

**Marine protected areas (MPAs):** They are likely to receive protection within no-take MPAs having suitable reef habitat along the southern Mozambique, KwaZulu-Natal and Pondoland coast.

## Reference

Information from the ORI Fish App. [www.saambr.org.za](http://www.saambr.org.za)



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