

Catch & Release guidelines for yellowfish anglers.

During the 2010 annual conference of the Yellowfish Working Group (YWG) one of the topics discussed was current catch and release (C&R) angling practices and the related research. The discussion was kicked off with a presentation by Prof Nico Smit from the Centre for Aquatic Research, University of Johannesburg. Prof Smit presented the results of their project on the physiological response of Vaal-Orange smallmouth yellowfish (*Labeobarbus aeneus*) to angling induced stress in the Vaal River, South Africa. In his presentation Prof Smit clearly stated that C&R angling is a very important conservation tool, but only if correctly practised. The aim of the research was therefore to determine how the different species responded to angling stress. Results showed that for smallmouth yellowfish the stress increased with an increase in angling time and also when angled during warmer water temperatures. The importance of this research is that it provides valuable data that can be used to identify gaps in our scientific knowledge and for establishing additional guidelines for successful C&R practices. Research also showed that due to the differences in their physiology, different species do not have similar responses to angling stress. For example blood parameters of tigerfish (caught at the same temperature) reach the same levels as those of smallmouth yellowfish after 2 minutes of angling (in comparison to 3 minutes), thus indicating that tigerfish is more sensitive to angling stress than smallmouth yellowfish. It is therefore important that instead of general guidelines we must work towards developing species specific guidelines for successful C&R. This will enable sport anglers to not only enjoy the fishing experience but also give them the assurance that they have done the best they can to ensure the survival of the fish they had the pleasure to catch and release. Future work on this topic will include the other yellowfish species as well as the effect of air exposure. In conclusion, the YWG feel strongly that they will:

- (1) continue to promote C&R as a conservation and fisheries management tool;
- (2) continue to support research that will provide us with all the information needed to establish species specific guidelines for C&R angling;
- (3) urge anglers to reduce fighting times by using appropriate tackle for the species targeted;
- (4) urge anglers to not prolong time taken to photograph fishes;
- (5) urge anglers to resuscitate tired fishes by holding the fish underwater, supporting the pelvic area and tail, with head facing the current until the fish is ready to swim off; and finally
- (6) adhere to angling legislation.

The complete report on angling stress is available on the FOSAF website (www.fosaf.co.za/ywgDocuments.php) as part of the proceedings of the 2010 annual conference.