

Record numbers of young barramundi found migrating into wetlands

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Juvenile barramundi are on the move in the Mackay region.

Recent monitoring of fish ladders situated in the Rocky Dam catchment south of Mackay has recorded huge numbers of juvenile fish migrating from upper tidal habitats into large, coastal wetlands.

Fish ladders are critical in providing access past fish barriers, so that juvenile fish can reach their desired wetland nursery habitats.

Overall, an average of 1,410 fish per day were recorded representing 10 species. Most importantly, record numbers of juvenile barramundi were recorded with an average of 86 per day ascending one of the fish ladders monitored.

Matt Moore, fisheries ecologist at Catchment Solutions who undertook the fish monitoring said: "Access to habitat is just as important as habitat itself. Fish ladders allow juvenile fish such as barramundi access to freshwater wetlands, where the abundance of in-stream habitat such as aquatic plants and logs allows them to evade predators, increasing their chance of survival, before migrating back to saltwater where they enter the fishery. This means more fish for everyone."

The size range of these barramundi was 25mm to 108mm, with the 25mm individual likely to be the smallest barramundi ever captured migrating up a fishway to access upstream wetland habitats.

These results are fantastic news for local fishermen who will benefit from this strong barramundi recruitment over the coming years.

The fishways have been co-funded by Reef Catchments and Mackay Regional Council, and delivered by Catchment Solutions. They are providing a huge boost to the region's fisheries resources and overall biodiversity.

For more information on the Reef Catchments wetlands project, please contact Jess Sabatino at Reef Catchments on jessica.sabatino@reefcatchments.com or (07) 4968 6127; mobile 0409 898 296.

For information about fish and fisheries relating to the wetlands, please contact Matt Moore at Catchment Solutions on mmoore@catchmentsolutions.com.au or (07) 4968 4214; mobile 0417 083 898.

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