

# Maml

The Maml (*Chelinus undulatus*) is a large, spectacular and valuable reef fish which is currently being threatened by overfishing. The Maml is known by many other names including Napoleon, Maori, or Humphead wrasse. This fish has almost completely disappeared in some parts of the world because of overfishing. It is internationally classified as a threatened species and is a priority for conservation.

## Life Cycle

There is still a lot to learn about this fish but already some things are known about its life history. It has a long life and matures slower than many fish species. It begins life as a female and later some of the larger individuals undergo sex change and become male.

It takes a juvenile approximately 5 years to mature into an adult. They can grow to more than 6 feet long, weigh over 280lbs and live for at least 30 years. They tend to feed mostly on invertebrates such as urchins, crabs, and shellfish

The juvenile of this species are black and white and are often found in and around live coral. In Palauan terminology, the fish at this stage is called a *terriid*. Over time changes in shape and color occur as the fish grows. After 5 years it is about 50 cm long and is said to be sexually mature. At this size, it is called a *ngimer* in Palauan. Fishes that survive and become larger than 3 feet will usually develop the characteristic hump on the forehead. This is when it becomes a *maml*.



## Exploitation in Palau

Maml are being overfished in Palau. Fishers are taking too many of them. Because they are a popular delicacy many local restaurants are buying this fish, prompting local fishermen to fish this species in order to provide continuous supply of its meat to the markets. This demand for its meat is compounded by the demand stemming from local customs. The result is that their abundance has declined and their average sizes have decreased in Palau.



## The Need to Conserve

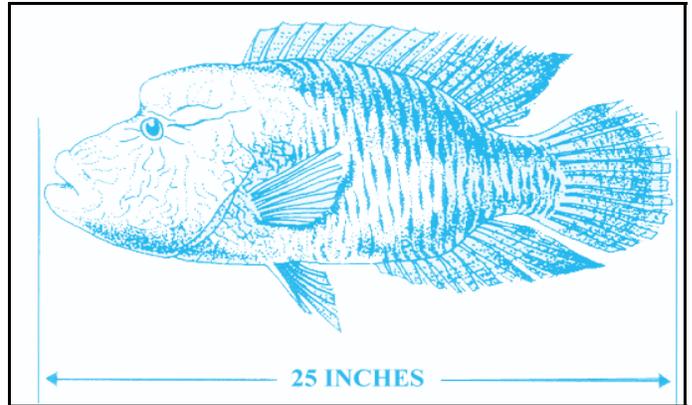
The challenge is to assess and manage the harvest of this important species so that low but sustainable levels of fishing can continue. To avoid overfishing, larger, older fish need some protection and young humphead wrasses should not be taken before sexual maturation. There is currently a law in Palau that prohibits the taking of individuals under 25 inches. There is also a ban on exportation of this species.

## Current Regulations

It is against the law to fish, buy, or sell a Napoleon wrasse (ngimer; *Cheilinus undulatus*) of less than 25 inches in length (measured from tip of snout to end of tail). It is against the law to export, or fish for, buy, or sell with the intent to export any Napoleon wrasse (ngimer, maml; *Cheilinus undulatus*), whatever the size.

**Ref. 27 PNCA 1204**

It is a solitary fish that lives in the vicinity of the deep and shallow sections of the coral reef. It feeds mostly on shellfish such as sea urchins, crustaceans and molluscs. The Maml grows slowly and take many years to attain adult size. By protecting the young specimens of less than 25 inches we increase their chances of reproduction before being captured.



## Importance for Palauans

The maml is an important fish in Palauan culture because its meat is highly valued. The meat is served to babies and elderly people because it is tender. It is also reserved for pregnant women or sick people. At important meetings or functions the maml is always reserved for high ranking people.

The maml is also a great attraction on the reef for tourist divers who come to Palau. Large individuals can usually be found at many of the popular dive sites and are a favorite among many of the divers. So as a diving attraction a live Napoleon wrasse can bring more money than if it was captured and soled on the marketplace.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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