

Nationals 2023

A week out from the 2023 New Zealand Sport Fishing Councils Nationals, Cyclone Gabrielle, hit New Zealand. The Cyclone was relentless, hitting coastal communities on both sides of the Country, especially the Eastern side of the North Island. Flooding and high winds caused power cuts affecting our affiliated clubs and their members. A few clubs really did it tough, notably Matarangi, Tairua-Pāuanui, Muriwai, Piha, Akitio, Hawke's Bay and Gisborne. These clubs let NZSFC know their situation and that unfortunately for some, this meant they had to withdraw many entries for this year's Nationals. Despite this, overall angler numbers were similar to last year and there was a resounding willingness from clubs wanting to participate as they were eagerly preparing to compete.

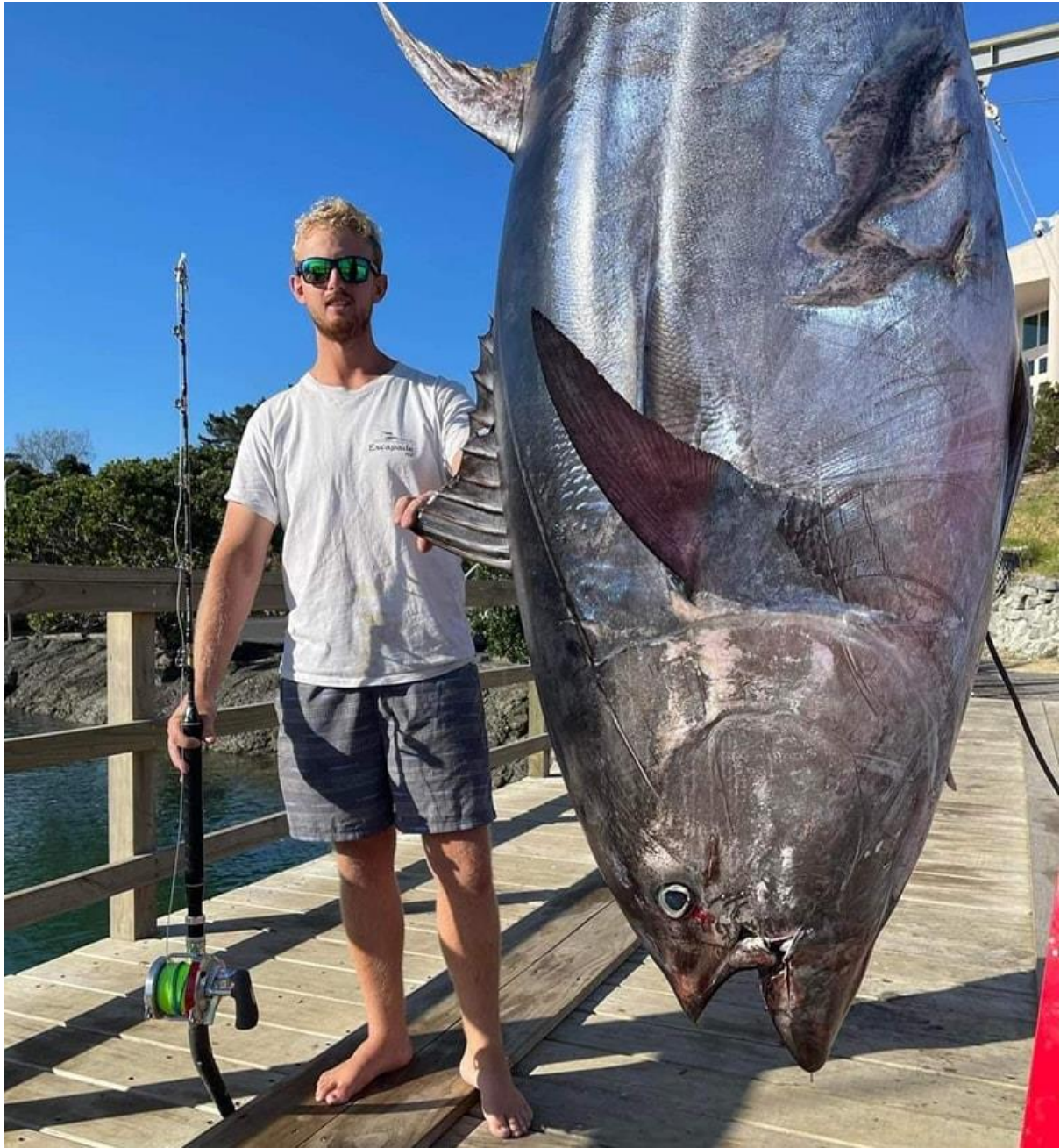
After a robust consultation with our clubs, delegates and anglers and receiving blessings from affected clubs, NZSFC's Board decided to proceed with the 2023 Nationals. This decision was made after assessing the effect of Cyclone Gabrielle on our clubs and members and carefully analysing the long-range forecast and forward conditions.

**A nice Mahimahi for Kane Spiers Mount Maunganui Club
Opposite: Tairua-Pauanui Club members get stuck in**



Forecast calm seas and clear skies provided excellent angling opportunities for the week on the water. With two Go Pro Hero 11s up for grabs in this year's photo competition, shots of action came through to NZSFC's Facebook and Instagram from early on Day 1. In total we received 119 photos from entrants with a variety of species on display. Photos are available for viewing on the NZSFC website and facebook page.

Most notable of the weighed catches was this epic Pacific Bluefin Tuna caught by Joshua Armstrong on Escapade fishing the King Bank representing Whangarei Deep Sea Anglers Club. The fish was weighed at Houhora Big Game & Sports Fishing Club weighing 283.4kg.



In addition to some great catches landed, over 280 billfish were tagged and released and 38 weighed this Nationals – that’s an amazing 88% tagged and released. Fishing on both the West Coast and East Coast was good, with most Clubs being able to fish 5 or 6 days out of the possible 8 total days.

Nationals stalwarts Mad Max ended up tagging 15 Striped Marlin.



Top team overall for the CD Rods Top Team was Mercury Bay Game Fishing clubs team Mercy. The Varta Cup, which is the 3 top scoring fish for each club, was won by Tauranga Sport Fishing Club winning the Varta Cup by tagging a variety of species including Broadbill, Striped Marlin, Blue Marlin, Yellowfin, Yellowtail Kingfish, Shortbill, Mahimahi, Albacore and Snapper.

The winner of the Photo competition for best marine life was this photo by Scott Norton of Callum Plummer on board Tangalooma fishing for Tairua Pauanui. The Judges felt this perfectly timed shot epitomises the unexpected elements and beauty of the Nationals.



The winning entry for funniest shot went to Sue Taylor. The photo shows Clinton Brock (Brocky) from Counties Sportfishing Club spending 20 minutes winding in his 80w Broadbill game road after it caught a tree on the way to the boat ramp. Sue Taylor is Brocky's mother-in-law who came across this sight on her way to work.



Both entries have won a GoPro Hero 11 thanks to Marine Deals.

All results including individual category winners can be found on the NZSFC website. Finally, we were surprised to see a Wahoo caught out from Waihou Bay during this year's Nationals. Although there isn't a Wahoo category (yet), this catch will be acknowledged by NZSFC with a plaque to be presented to Mark Drought onboard Limitless, representing the New Plymouth Sportfishing and Underwater Club.

The heaviest recorded Wahoo in NZ waters is 40.4kg caught in the year 2000 by D Harrap off Parengarenga.



In total 65 recorded Wahoo have been caught in NZ waters since 1993. By comparison, 2665 Mahi Mahi have been caught in the same time period.

Despite Cyclone Gabrielle's wrath, some excellent fishing days were on offer this year, NZSFC Clubs are looking forward to formally acknowledging all of this year's winners at their respective Club prizegiving events.

NZSFC's next comp is Youth Nationals in April school holidays – again fished concurrently around New Zealand.