

Youth Nationals 2023 proudly supported by Daiwa



competing anglers at this year's Youth Nationals.

The NZSFC Youth Nationals were contested over the recent school holiday in April. The event encourages young people to spend time outdoors and connect with nature. As we know, fishing requires a great deal of patience, strategy, and technical know-how. Competitors learn how to understand the weather conditions, choose the right bait, tie knots, and cast or drop a line accurately. These life skills and problem-solving and decision-making abilities can be applied not just to fishing but also to other areas of life. The NZSFC Youth Nationals fishing competition has gained popularity since its inauguration last year, and for good reason. This event provides a unique opportunity for young people to experience the joys of fishing while also developing many important life skills, and spending quality time with friends and family over the School Holidays. NZSFC's Communications and Operations Lead, Mike Plant followed a few of the

Above - Summer Korkie from Kawhia Club Tagging a Striped Marlin

By just participating in the NZSFC Youth Nationals, young people are encouraged to spend more time in nature, breathe fresh air, and appreciate the beauty of their surroundings. Youth Nationals offers a break from the routines of daily life and provides an opportunity for young people to challenge themselves and have fun. The NZSFC Youth Nationals promote outdoor recreation, teaching new skills, encouraging sportsmanship and fair play, promotes conservation and responsible fishing practices, it also provides a social outlet, while offering a source of fun and excitement.

Mike Plant travelled to Tokelau Beach in Doubtless Bay to catch up with Blake Hay who spent the 2 week competition chasing a variety of fish.

"My most memorable fish is the stripy that is leading the Whangarei Deep Sea Anglers Club, I fought it for over 3 hours when we went out past the Poor Knights" said a proud Blake, "But while I'm up here I'm targeting Bronzies to get more points, I've also lost some good fish to the Tax man".

Blake Hay mentioned he wanted to become more involved in the NZSFC Youth Council and had some great ideas to further develop the competition. "I'd like to see the points awarded for released fish to be the same or greater than weighed fish, I often don't weigh fish and receive fewer points, but I love seeing these beautiful fish swim away."



Blake Hay with what was a good Snapper



Brock Johnston is another keen High School angler competing in this year's Youth Nationals. Brock's father Shane Johnston explained "It's just so great spending time with my son doing something he loves and is invested in. He is engaged with all things fishing and an active member of Counties Sport Fishing Club." Mike quizzed Brock, also a member of the NZSFC Youth committee, on why he chooses to spend his spare time helping with the admin side. Brock explains, "Someone's gotta do it, it's all about having fun, getting involved and fishing, I'm getting more involved with the Club and spoke at the youth nationals briefing with Steve Harper and Steve Watts".

Brock Johnston with a Tagged Bronze whaler in Rangiputa

Brock said "Light lines are what I'm fishing now, an inshore fish on light line is easily as much fun as a big offshore fish on heavy tackle, I love the fight and there's light line NZ records that I'm targeting". Brock's best fish was a mako shark while trolling, on the west coast over an hour of fighting and was over 300kg when he tagged and released it.



Brock Johnston, who normally fishes Raglan and the Manukau harbour was also in Tokelau while a 40kt NE was blowing in. Brock had never met Blake Hay before seeing him on Rangiputa Beach targeting Bronzies. The boys, though they had never met in person, knew everything about each other and where they both were standing on the competition leaderboard; they had also seen each other's catches on social media. Blake saw Brock's shark gear and the boys struck up a conversation about all things fishing. Blake asked if Brock needed any extra tackle, bait or gloves, they shared tips and stories and were equally excited to see each other's rod bend with another fish. Brock's father Shane said "I was amazed at the sportsmanship, these two young men, essentially fierce rivals, were doing everything possible to help each other out. The boys swapped details and want to fish together on both coasts. I guess it's up to us parents to make it happen". Brock's father Shane made 2, 6 hour trips with Brock to target fish in Northland and the travel time paid off with Brock becoming the 2023 overall High School Champion and his club Counties Sportfishing winning top Club.

Brock Johnston and Blake Hay meet for the first time

The NZSFC Youth Nationals provides a social outlet for young people. They can meet and interact with other young people who share their interests. This can help to build friendships, develop social skills, and foster a sense of community.

Emily and Ryan Steele are siblings fishing for New Plymouth Sportfishing and Underwater Club. Last year their club won Top Club, Ryan was second placed in the Primary section and Emily the top Junior in the secondary school division. This year the weather had other plans at their home in Taranaki, so the family headed to Tairua and the wider Coromandel Peninsula to try some new spots. The same choice to fish new grounds that worked so well for Brock Johnston was not to bring the same fortunes to the Steele siblings, with a lack of knowledge of the area costing the defending champion valuable fish and therefore points.

Emily Steele still found time to capture this great entry in the best Live Marine category

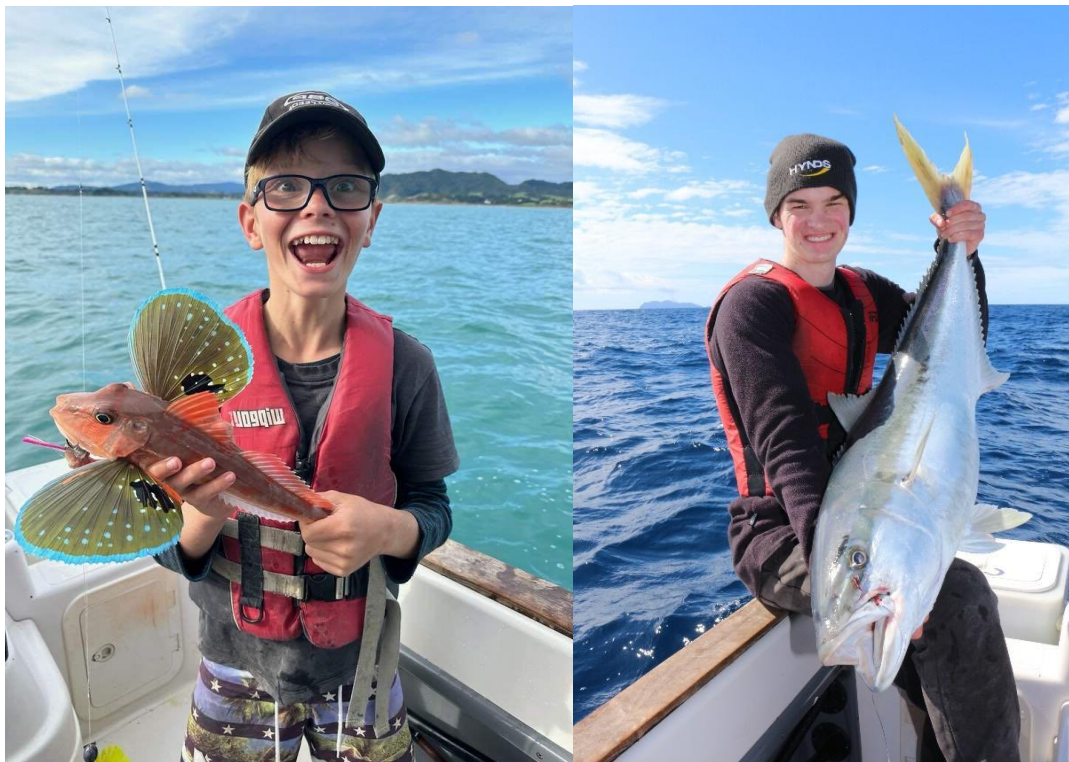


Younger brother Ryan talks about the Youth Nationals with great enthusiasm, "I think it is a cool sport to be part of, especially as only a small number of us from NPSUC ended up beating other clubs with more entries than us. I'm proud that I've done so well both years. Next year I'll be in the high school division so hope to do well moving up a level too". Ryan says that Mako sharks are his favourite fish to catch because they have big teeth. Although he has his eyes firmly set on catching a Marlin, something his older sister has already achieved.

Emily, a member of NZSFC's Youth committee, and last year's overall champion says "I was very proud to be part of the youth committee that set up the youth nationals. To win was an even bigger achievement but not only that, the competition last year was fun throughout the two weeks. First place position was going back and forth between myself and the other anglers, just like it has this year. This year it's great to see a lot more kids competing in the Youth Nationals and I hope to see it continue to grow." Emily is another keen youth member who has helped out in the club kitchen and volunteers where possible for the club. When Mike spoke to her she was humble in defeat this year yet had a spurred appetite for vengeance at next year's competition. Perhaps she should cast her eyes closer to home as younger brother Ryan said "I was proud of my sister last year and this year. Next year we will both be in the high school section, so she'll have to watch out!".

The NZSFC Youth Nationals promotes sportsmanship and fair play. The competitive nature of this event teaches young people to respect rules, follow instructions, and work as a team. Competing against other young people can be a thrilling experience, and catching a big fish can be incredibly satisfying.

Another duo of siblings competing this year are the Speed brothers from Mount Maunganui Sportfishing Club. Tyler won the overall Junior division last year, and Hayden came a close second to Emily Steele. This year Tyler was eager to repeat the triumph and Hayden to go one better.



Tyler Speed Winner of the Primary Division and brother Hayden second overall in the High School Division

Their plan for this year's Youth Nationals was to try to tick off all the inshore species caught on light line early in the tournament. Theoretically this would then free up the final week to chase a Marlin or a Swordfish. However, the weather had other ideas as both weeks the North Easterlies roared, making it hard to get out anywhere. This largely took gamefish off the cards and limited their fishing opportunities all together. So they went back to the drawing board to come up with a plan that would hopefully still see success. Plan B worked and Tyler won the Overall Primary category for the second year in a row and Hayden finished second overall this year to Brock Johnston in the High School section.

Tyler's favourite thing about the youth nationals is being able to do heaps of fishing over the whole school holidays, he thinks there could be no better way to spend the school holidays. After a repeat win in the Primary section, he was elated. When asked what the best thing is about being Primary Overall champion at the Youth Nationals Tyler replied, "It was pretty cool to be invited to the NZSFC awards evening last year to receive the trophy!".

Hayden Speed, in his final year of competition, says "The Youth Nationals has been a blast, it has an awesome structure that caters towards everyone. Whether it's fishing light line for points, targeting the trophies in the all-tackle section, going out and measuring fish for the longest category, tagging fish or a combination of all the above. There's something for everyone which gives everyone a target

to work towards. I've been a member of the Mount Maunganui Sportfishing Club since I could barely walk. I've joined the committee and am enjoying helping with life around the club, I love it".

The NZSFC Youth Nationals returns next year from Saturday 13th April to Saturday 27th April.

Hayden, Brock and Emily are all members of the NZSFC Youth Committee. A great sign of our youth giving back to the sport they love.

We have some great family fishing teams such as the La Franchie family from Kawhia Club and the Pask brothers from Whakatane Club, it is so great to have too many to be able to mention them all.

Our photo competition winners are as follows:-

Junior Section

Funny Photo

Winner – Clown fish – Austen Pask – Whakatane Sport Fishing Club

Second – Westie Mullet – Jake Harper – Counties Sports Fishing Club

Third – Action figures – Levi Nicholson - Mercury Bay Game Fishing Club

Live Marine

Albatross – Tyler Speed – Mt Maunganui Sportfishing Club

Shark tagged – Cooper and Issac Thomsen – Tairua – Pauanui Sports Fishing Club

Channel Marker – Indi Harper – Counties Sports Fishing Club

Senior

Funny

Winner Still fishing – Brock Johnson – Counties Sports Fishing Club

Second Hayley Pye dropped her fish – Kawhia Boating & Angling Club

Third Burley Pot – Regan Dickson – Counties Sports Fishing Club

Live Marine

Winner above and below – Emily Steele – New Plymouth Sportfishing and Underwater Club

2nd Live Kingfish for release – Hayden Speed – Mt Maunganui Sportfishing Club

3rd – whale island scene – Olliver Pask – Whakatane Sport Fishing Club

These photos will be on our website shortly.