

## Foreword

The billfishes are an important but enigmatic group of fishes. Comprising the marlins, sailfish, spearfish and swordfish of the world, these apex predators are key components of oceanic ecosystems and are commercially, recreationally and artisanally important in many regions of the world. Because they are often not targeted, but caught as a bycatch of the world's large tuna fisheries, billfish generally fail to attract the scientific interest and research funding that is accorded to tunas. Nevertheless, their growing economic importance, and their undoubted aesthetic appeal and mystique, make the billfishes a group worthy of considerable attention.

The papers comprising this volume derive from the Third International Billfish Symposium, held in Cairns Australia, 19–23 August, 2001. The First and Second International Billfish Symposia were both held in Kona, Hawaii, in 1972 and in 1988 respectively. Those meetings, and their published proceedings, represent watersheds in the advancement of knowledge of these important fishes. However, it is fair to say that since the last symposium in 1988, little worldwide attention has been focused on the group as a whole. The 2001 meeting therefore provided an opportunity for the latest information on billfish to be presented to an international audience and, perhaps more importantly, to stimulate scientists to conduct the work necessary to develop reliable stock assessments of billfishes in the three major oceans of the world as well as to consider approaches to ecosystem-based management of ocean communities. At the time of the Symposium, exciting developments were, and still are, taking place in the field of electronic tag technology—developments being applied to unlocking many of the secrets of billfish behaviour, biology and biogeography. Considerable work on stock structure of the billfishes has been conducted since the second symposium and key papers in all of the above fields were presented, and form part of this volume.

The overriding theme for the Symposium was 'Global Sustainability of Billfish—Research, Assessment and Management in the 21st Century'. The subthemes, and the keynote speakers who addressed these, were: Stock structure of the world's billfishes (John Graves); Stock assessment of billfish populations (Yuji Uozumi); Biological studies (Kim Holland); Management of the world's billfish (Jill Stevenson); Socio-economic value of billfish (Robert Ditton); and Status of broadbill swordfish (Gerald Scott).

The Symposium attracted 120 participants from 22 countries. A total of 56 papers and posters were presented and a workshop on managing billfish was held during the meeting. The papers published here are the peer reviewed and accepted papers that were submitted following the Symposium.

A meeting such as this could not have occurred without the generous support of a number of sponsors. These were, in order of their contributions, The Billfish Foundation (TBF), the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC), Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry Australia (AFFA), the US National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), CSIRO Marine Research, the Game Fishing Association of Australia (GFAA) Research & Development Foundation, Bluewater Boats and Sportfishing and Craig Smith Marine Art.

The Organizing Committee and Program Committee worked hard to ensure that this was a highly successful meeting. The committees included the following people. Organizing Committee: Chair, Capt David Tomlinson, Dr John Glaister, Dr Michael Hinton, Dr Julian Pepperell, Dr Eric Prince and Dr Ziro Suzuki. Program Committee: Chair, Dr Julian Pepperell, Dr Richard Brill, Dr John Gunn, Dr John Kalish, Dr Eric Prince and Mr Wade Whitelaw.

Special mention must be made of Captain David Tomlinson's role in the organization of the Symposium. David initially underwrote the costs of the Symposium, and played a key role in the organization of the meeting's logistics in Cairns. His enthusiasm was unwavering throughout the two years of its planning and assured its ultimate success. Rochelle Manderson of Ozacom is to be commended for attending to every detail of the Symposium from start to finish. Ann Grant, Melissa Storey and Dugald McGlashan of *Marine and Freshwater Research*, whose difficult job it was to undertake the editorial role for this volume, are also gratefully acknowledged.

With the publication of this volume, it is hoped that it will take its place alongside the proceedings of the first two International Billfish Symposia, adding to our knowledge of the biology of this remarkable group of fishes. Let us hope that the next international billfish forum will further add to this repository and that it is not too long in its realization.

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