

## Technology To The Rescue Of Undersized Fish

by Gopalan T on July 20, 2011 at 8:23 AM

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Australian scientists have evolved a device that could help undersized fish make their way back into the ocean and protect them from being preyed upon by sea birds.

Fish that are too small for catch are now being redeposited back into the ocean through chutes made of heavy duty shade cloth and wire.

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The initiative began when a SeaNet officer noticed returned fish had little chance against opportunistic sea birds. Without the chance to reorientate themselves the fish became easy prey.

The Fishute hooks on the side of the boat and is weighted one metre below the waterline, allowing fish recover from oxygen deprivation and swim downward to avoid predation.

The chute also has decoy 'eyes' to visually deter potential predators.

Ocean Watch's SeaNet extension officer Neil Webb now manages this initiative in partnership with the Challenger Institute and South Coast Natural Resource Management.

Students from Challenger Institute helped make the first fishutes as a part of a fishing sustainability

course in 2010 with more [set](#) to be made this year.

There are now 25 fishute units in use in the Southern Coast Estuarine Fishery region (SCEF), all provided for free as a part of the FishNet initiative.

Mr Webb says that the [design](#) has worked in keeping sea birds away and allowing small fish to live.

“There’s been a few prototypes of solid PVC tubes but now we’ve got to the collapsible one where it weighs a quarter of a kilo and you can put it in a small dinghy,” he says.

“It’s not just for professional fishermen, the applications could be for recreational fishermen too.”

He’s also positive that the concept can be re- worked so it can be applied to larger commercial [fishing](#) operations.

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