



numbers of red moki, grouper and porae, and many reefs are now deserts, denuded even of smaller fish like demoiselles, maomao and leather jackets. The set net is appropriately called the "grab all" in Tasmania. Helped by the spear fishers, the set net is efficiently destroying the reef community.

Prize winning underwater photographer Andy Belcher says: "Set netting has ruined Mayor Island reefs. They used to be alive with fish of all sizes. Now you can swim and swim

and never see a big fish. It's a desert out there."

DoC Officer Allan Jones has just surveyed Mayor Island to produce a marine reserve proposal. His observations bear out Andy's comments. "Mayor Island was subject to heavy set netting, but there's not much netting now that the fish have gone. The only big red moki left are in places where the shape of the reef discouraged spear fishers and prevented nets being set."

A ban on set nets is essential to save the vanishing red moki and all the beautiful and varied fish of the reefs.

Why do we accept and even admire killing these restricted populations of native species, when we would deplore such killing of sea-gulls or even sparrows? It is time we took a more enlightened attitude towards our reef fish, which are just as much a part of New Zealand's natural heritage as our native birdlife. 🐟