



SSACN

Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network

Annual Review 2010 – 2011





SSACN Annual Review

Another terrific year for SSACN as we continue to develop on all fronts thanks.

Our main thrust this year has been the further development of the Scottish Shark Tagging Programme (SSTP) where we have been able to recruit Project Coordinators for both the Argyll and Dumfries regions thanks to funding from SNH and the regional Leader programmes.

The Events Team successfully ran Spurdog and Skate Tagathons; these combined with our flagship event - Sharkatag – continue to allow us to gather the data necessary to try and ensure a future for the various shark species, sea angling and to raise the public awareness of the very poor state of the inshore marine environment.

To increase our communication capabilities both of our websites have been revamped and a Facebook presence for the SSTP established.

The year ahead promises to be demanding (so no change there !) and though the SSTP will continue to be a substantial part of our work, we shall be increasing our investment in training, education and the use of new methods and technologies.

*Recognising everyone who has given their support is impossible but, as always, **our thanks go to our Members and volunteers** – without their input, help, guidance and support, SSACN would not be able to achieve the results it does.*

All the best for 2011/12

The Management Team of SSACN



Upcoming Event dates :

2012 Skate Tagathon – 13-15 April

2012 Sharkatag – 15-17 June

2012 Spurdog Tagathon – 2-4 November



From the inception of SSACN, the Scottish Shark Tagging Programme (SSTP) was a long held goal.

Last year we were able to recruit a 'Shark Project Officer' in Oban thanks to a funding package put together by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the Argyll and the Islands LEADER Programme; this year those two bodies renewed their commitment and thanks to Dumfries and Galloway Leader we were also able to recruit an extra Officer in that area.

A significant political change

In a press release by Cabinet Secretary, Lochhead he said:

"Protecting vulnerable marine species is crucially important. Some shark, skate and ray populations are critically endangered and already protected from commercial fishing. However, these species need additional protection and so Scotland intends to introduce a new protection order to help stock recovery."

Sharkatag2011

Sharkatag continues to be a very special and well supported event - as usual, the venue was the western end of the Solway in South West Scotland.

Around 140 anglers of all capabilities from all over the UK descended on the area to combine their love of fishing with a serious effort to gather data.

Once again the numbers of tope caught were about 50% down on the previous year though the numbers of smoothhound increased by roughly the same percentage.

Evidence from this and previous years events seems to confirm the anecdotal evidence from several anglers that tope numbers are continuing to decrease.

We do not know whether this is down to overfishing on their wintering grounds, changes in their Northern migration route, or as a result of some other factor, but there is a definite need for more research.

Spurdog Tagathon 2010

Over 100 anglers turned out to take part in the event and show a level of commitment to the conservation aspects of our sport that is unparalleled.

Once again, not only was there was a high percentage of 'regulars' but this year there were many new anglers as well as students and scientists from SAMS (the Scottish Association for Marine Science).

Unfortunately the quality of the fishing didn't quite match the effort put into it; around 275 fish were taken, of which only 25 or so were of taggable size.

A reminder of why the Spurdog tagging events are so important comes from a recent OSPAR report which concluded that spurdog stocks are seriously depleted in fisheries throughout the North East Atlantic.

It also highlighted that the scarcity of large mature females - fish in the past which were specifically targeted by commercial long-liners – resulting in the consequent poor recruitment and very slow recovery of the stocks.

Skate Tagathon 2011

The latest addition to our Events calendar it's purpose is to provide additional research data regarding skate.

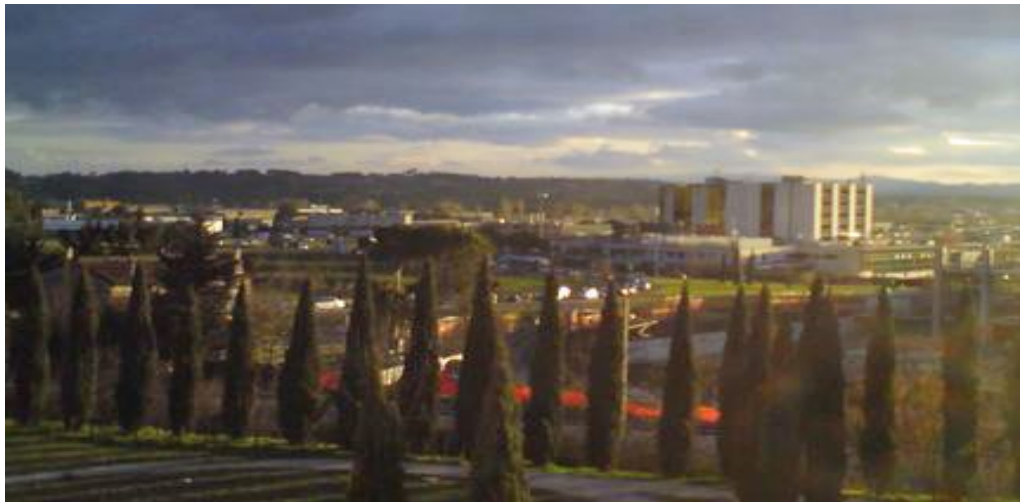
Over 70 fish were caught, tagged and released back into their natural environment, and for one fish, this was the ninth time it had been captured and released in the past three years !

Regional media, Visit Scotland, local officials and the economist Alan Radford were on board our press boat to witness first hand the conservation efforts of the volunteer anglers.



Measure up !

The tagging programme is an essential activity if we are to be able to monitor the state of Scottish shark stocks and help ensure the future of sea angling.



SSACN goes international

Denis Kelly, our Secretary, was invited to visit the army language school in Perugia, Italy.

Denis was hosted by Brigadier General Di Luzio and Lt. Colonel Luppa, both veterans of Kosovo.

Introducing Denis to the student body (comprising around 90 officers ranked Major and above) Brig. Gen. Di Luzio said that the basis of the invitation was not only the subject of the talks, but the language contained in them plus the attendant message of conservation, sustainability, and the responsibility of every individual to be aware of the state of their marine environment.

He also added that listening to the varied dialects and accents in the videos from SSACN's Sharktag and Tagathon Events would give the students an opportunity to use listening as part of their learning experience.

During the talks the students were encouraged to ask questions at any time, they did and raised some good points.

But there is always one !

A Major asked if it was true that shark fin soup was an aphrodisiac !

Asked had he tried it and did it work - he said yes and no – so, to laughter and applause from the audience, Denis assured him that there was an over the counter product that was cheaper and effective.

All in all Denis spent a couple of very enjoyable weeks at the school presenting on sharks in general, the work of SSACN / SSTP in particular and undertaking a series of one on one sessions reviewing presentations the students had prepared for an exam on which their future careers depended !

Glasgow Angling Centre Open Weekend

SSACN attended the Glasgow Angling Centre open weekend (24th/25th Sept) to promote shark tagging and conservation to the visitors.

We would like to thank everyone who stopped by to sign up for the SSTP or to find out more about our work – the support we received was terrific.

Mike Thrussell, the well known angling journalist and tackle developer also dropped by and exchanged some thoughts on fishing. Speaking about the work being carried out in Scotland by SSACN Mike said:

“It’s great to be able to support SSACN and the SSTP in their work to conserve fish stocks and raise awareness of the good work angling can achieve for conservation when united.

“It is my hope that as many anglers as possible get involved in this excellent programme as I feel it is vitally important to the future of sharks and to the preservation of recreational sea angling as a whole!”



The weekend included a broad range of events including casting and fly tying demonstrations; it would be well worth going along to the next one if you get the chance.

SSACN's 3rd Party MPA Proposals

Marine Scotland has international commitments to deliver an ecologically coherent network of well managed MPAs.

These are intended to complement marine components of sites designated under EU Habitats and Birds Directives, SSSIs and Ramsar sites to form the main elements of a network.

Other area-based protection measures may also be considered for the contribution to biodiversity / geodiversity protection that a particular area delivers, either directly or indirectly.

Nature Conservation MPAs will be based primarily on scientific evidence using a set of established guidelines whilst Demonstration & Research MPAs can be established for the purpose of demonstrating, or researching sustainable methods of marine management or exploitation in Scottish territorial waters.

The processes of MPA designation allow for third parties to propose Demonstration & Research or Nature Conservation MPAs .

SSACN are proposing four Nature Conservation MPAs :

- ➔ Sound of Jura – Skate
- ➔ Loch Sunart – Spurdog & skate (already on MPA list)
- ➔ Loch Etive – Spurdog nursery area.
- ➔ Firth of Lorne – skate (possible spurdog around spelve and the ammunition dump)
- ➔ and also proposing a D&R MPA for:
- ➔ Luce Bay – All species and habitat

Sound of Jura, Lochs Sunart and Etive

Sound of Jura and Loch Sunart – both areas have stocks of skate and Sunart contains multiple other conservation features of interest.

Loch Etive – is being submitted on the basis that the area is a possible nursery and pupping ground for spurdog. Even though spurdog are already protected by the new legislation for sharks in Scotland, this is 'critical habitat' for the species.

At the moment there are not many activities in Etive, Long lining has stopped and the current ICZM Plans do not expect it will begin again. There are creel pots in the loch and the mouth of the loch is trawled regularly.

As there's little overall activity in the loch it means it means the government may see it having inadequate need for designation and see current management plans as being as sufficient – this is their general fall back position.

Firth of Lorne

There are high numbers of skate in this area and therefore we feel, a strong case for protection.

However, it would overlay a SAC already in place and the Government's base position is that MPAs will be used to compliment, not duplicate, other protected areas (SACs etc) and that they would need to be convinced there is a good case to do so.

Therefore we must show that the MPA designation would add something to existing protection.

Luce Bay

Luce Bay would be, as one of the strongest remaining sea angling destinations, a perfect area to designate as a D&R MPA due to the high social and economic benefit derived from it and to promote it as a sea angling centre.

However, due to the high level of activity in the area it will require substantial stakeholder buy-in.

That said, we can but try.

Current Proposed schedule

Jan 2012 - All 3rd party proposals should be submitted to SNH. We are doing this now.

SNH should have a list of all search areas to be considered and draw up the final search areas

Jan/Feb 2012 - 4th MPA meeting

Dec 2012 - MPA areas should be decided (we think this is probably ambitious target for them but provisional areas are likely to be decided)

A few facts and figures (last years no's in brackets)

- Sea angling is the #1 coastal participation activity.
- Sea anglers contribute around £150 million/yr to the Scottish economy and support 4000 jobs.
- SSACN has over 550 followers on Facebook (350)
- 400+ anglers have taken part in tagging events (300)
- 50 people have contributed material on our sites (35)
- Over 300 people visit our sites every day.
- Over 4000 people have downloaded material.
- YOU CAN JOIN IN TOO – contact@ssacn.org

Meet the Team

This edition – David McNair – Education

As a Sea Angler with around 35+ years experience I clearly remember the days when catching 20+ codling during a days fishing in the Clyde area was nothing to brag about.



About eight years ago I teamed up with Jim Kyle (SANA) to help introduce and formalise angling coaching in Scotland and along with Ian Robertson we created a development plan for Scottish angling.

Working regularly with the Dreamstore Academy, and Angling for Youth Development I have assisted in the training of over 100 coaches which include the majority of the present SFSA coaches.

I have also worked with the UK source group as the Scottish Technical representative in the development of the UKCC level 2 Coaching qualifications

I've been with SSACN since its inception - joining an organisation which addressed parts of sea angling that were being completely neglected by the sport / competition orientated sectors made perfect sense.

No fish -No Anglers - No fishing !

I firmly believe it is essential to engage the wider community and my role in SSACN is to do just that.

SISP and surveying fish populations.

SSACN has a vision of protecting and developing sea angling through well managed recreational fisheries.

To achieve this we need to be able to assess stocks in any given area and repeat the process to evaluate any gains or losses in order to track the progress of any management plans.

When SSACN approached the government scientists, we were told the technology wasn't there to survey near-shore fish populations, the challenge therefore was to research a suitable methodology.

This was no small project and required a broad cross section of knowledge and a lot of effort, obviously far more than SSACN on its own could deliver.

So to achieve the work we collaborated with the University Marine Biological Station Millport, MS Science and Glasgow University in a **SISP** (Scottish Industry Science Partnership) programme.

SISP programmes are funded by the Scottish Government and their aim to enhance the co-operation between fishermen and scientists.

SSACN were the industry lead in the partnership and it was the first time sea angling interests have been the subject of a government research program.

Three methods were trialled :

- ➔ baited underwater cameras,
- ➔ fish traps and
- ➔ systematic rod-and-line surveys,

The success of the methods used in the trials combined with computer modelling can now be used to estimate stock dynamics.

A full report can be found in our 'Reading Room' at www.ssacn.org/reading-room.

What's Next ?

For the next few months our focus will be to:

- Continue to provide input regarding Scottish Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).
- Help finalise the recommendations of the Scottish Government's RSA Strategy Group set up to identify the way forward for the sport.
- Monitoring the development of the National Marine Plan which will set out the strategic objectives for the Scottish marine area.
- Maintain our membership of The Marine Strategy Forum.
- Make significant investments to extend the use of social media and different technical platforms.
- Undertake the research to support the next set of projects, whilst completing the current ones.

And of course, the Events Team will be running both Sharkatag and the Skate / Spurdog Tagathon Events.



As always, so much to do, so little time ! If you would like to contribute your skills, just drop an email to contact@ssacn.org.