

Lifelines

The Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network

Autumn 08 Newsletter
www.ssacn.org

This last year

It has been a fantastic year in the development of SSACN.

From our beginnings in a hotel 18 months ago, we now have a strong and growing member base, a useful and informative website and a growing dedicated team doing their bit for their sport.

To raise the profile of sea angling and represent our conservation interests we have taken part in Cabinet Level Task Forces and many national events.

We have also attended 70 plus meetings with politicians, Coastal Forums, the Marine Directorate, leaders of the commercial sector and many other bodies.

Some of this work has had an immediate bearing on our future, other elements will take time, but now, more and more of the people who can make a difference are aware of the SSACN presence.

Considering everything that has happened in this hectic year, the key event was our Lifelines presentation held in Holyrood.

For this we developed a video showing how important sea angling can be to a coastal community; this, along with a number of papers highlighting issues was presented to a broad range of politicians and NGOs.

That evening there was the first ever parliamentary debate on sea angling motion raised by John Scott MSP (Ayr) (Cons) which had received cross party support.

This coming year we will be undertaking a series of practical research projects and initiatives to address a variety of issues whilst continuing to increase the Scottish Governments awareness of the needs of recreational sea anglers.

Thank you for your support.



A smile as big as a fish

(The fish was returned to the sea immediately after the photo)

Decline in stocks demands Best Value

Fishing down the food chain, over capacity, discards and so on have depleted traditional stocks.

With limited quotas the catching sector is being encouraged to diversify into non-quota species such as

pollack and wrasse which are regarded as 'important displacement stock'.

The Government needs to take a 'Best Value' approach to stock management, one which recognizes there is far greater potential for social

<http://tinyurl.com/3hwhos>

and economic value if the management objectives for certain species are aimed at developing the recreational sea angling sector.

Many fish are worth more ALIVE in the sea than DEAD on the fishmongers slab.

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This year in brief:

- First year as a registered charity
- Joined Sustainable Seas Task Force
- SSACN Drummore economic study
- SSACN Event held in Holyrood
- First parliamentary sea angling debate
- Government begins their Economic Study.
- Attended meetings in EU Parliament
- Research partnership with SEA LIFE

**“Sandra Birkenhead –
cafe owner**

“This is a place of natural beauty as well as peace and quiet, but this alone is not enough to bring people here”

“In my opinion, 75% of the tourists come to this area for sea angling”

**Eric McLean – sports
shop owner**

“Angling is the biggest participation sport in the area but the lack of fish is creating a decline for many businesses”

In February SSACN held a very successful Event in the Scottish Parliament buildings which was hosted by John Scott, MSP (Con).

The need for the event came about when it became obvious in meetings with politicians and the Marine Directorate that although they recognize there are commercial fishing communities they were not aware of angling communities.

Thus the basis of the Event was to demonstrate how sea angling provides a ‘Lifeline’ to the economies of many coastal communities and how the continued depletion of fish stocks is affecting our sport, marine habitats and the potential tourism benefit to Scotland which healthy seas could offer.

We opened the Event by showing an excerpt from a DVD we have made depicting how important sea angling is to small local businesses such

as cafes, caravan parks, tackle shops, etc.

In fact sea angling supports 20 full time jobs in the small community of Drummorie population 420.

A copy of the DVD can be obtained by emailing us at contact@ssacn.org

Following the video and a detailed presentation a panel session was carried out to allow members of SSACN, a range of angling groups and other interested parties the opportunity to ask questions of MSPs from all the main political parties.

The day concluded with a debate in Parliament of a Members Motion (S3M-1096) which had received cross part support, recognizing the importance of sea angling to Scotland Plc.

This was the first time sea angling has ever been discussed in Parliament.

John Scott’s Motion (S3M-1096)

That the Parliament notes the economic and social importance of recreational sea angling to communities along the west coast and across Scotland; further notes that around 225,000 people participate in the sport annually with an average spend of £1,375 for boat anglers and £861 for shore anglers; recognizes that most species of interest to sea anglers have limited commercial value and are returned alive to the sea, representing an excellent financial return for “Scotland plc”; affirms the extremely low environmental cost of recreational sea angling which is at the forefront of sustainable fishing and especially welcomes the Give Fish a Chance initiative from the Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network, encouraging anglers to keep only those fish which have reached breeding size; regrets the substantial decline of the sport and supporting industries, notably on the Firth of Clyde, due to a loss of stocks with a number of species becoming extinct locally or reduced to the point where only juvenile specimens are now being caught; notes with concern the critically endangered status of key species, such as common skate, porbeagle and spurdog, which bring sea anglers to Scotland, and considers that work between the Scottish Government, sea angling bodies and other relevant agencies should continue to ensure the conservation of key species and the continued growth of sea angling in Scotland.

SEA LIFE boost SSACN research

Earlier this year we were pleased to announce a link between SSACN and SEA LIFE to enable us to use their research facilities and take advantage of their environmental and biological experience to provide us with a unique resource to support our vital practical conservation programmes.

Since then, the Loch Lomond Aquarium and 11 other SEA LIFE centres have installed a series of information boards to enable us to raise public awareness

of the many issues affecting sea fish stocks and the marine environment.

Currently the boards are highlighting the plight of sharks with a special focus on our tagging programme.

Recently SEA LIFE has also been kind enough to make a substantial donation to our funds to help support our educational outreach activities.

This is significant recognition of our goals and objectives by a major company.



Denis Kelly - SSACN’s Secretary - is seen receiving a very generous cheque for £1500 from Mark Hind and Adam Downs of the SEA LIFE Loch Lomond Aquarium.

Port William - World Ocean Day

In July, SSACN members Denis Kelly, Alun & Gareth Heydon and David McNair went down to Port William in Dumfries & Galloway to represent us at their World Ocean Day event.

The aim of event is to celebrate the diversity of the marine environment and encourage everyone to think about how they can help ensure it is protected and conserved for future generations.

The event is especially geared towards getting the interest of children and it succeeded in doing just that.

The SSACN stand was very busy and many people took the time to listen to what the team had to say as well as to provide us with helpful contributions.

Our literature, especially that relating to the sharks, was in great demand from children and adults alike.



Alun & Gareth
At World Ocean Day

SSACN focus on Sharks

www.ssacn.org/sharks-fighting-for-survival

SHARK CONFERENCE

SSACN were invited to join the Shark Alliance this year for their work on sharks.

Denis Kelly and Ian Burrett attended a conference in Brussels to highlight the dramatic decline in European shark populations, the role Europe plays in the global shark trade, and the threat that European Union's poor shark policies pose to sharks around the world.

They also attended a number of associated meetings and workshops and gave a short presentation to the UK's permanent representative highlighting Scotland's poor record in protecting those sharks classed 'critically endangered' according to the IUCN - International Union for Conservation of Nature.

TOPE ON THE TV

In a recent 4 minute segment Border ITV interviewed Ian Burrett to highlight the crazy situation where it is illegal to land tope on the English side of the Solway, but legal on the Scottish side.

The situation arises due to the Governments' refusal to introduce an instrument similar to the English Tope (Prohibition of Fishing) Order 2008 which prohibits catching tope other than by rod & line and sets a by-catch limit for commercial fisheries targeting other species.

The Government claim to be watching stock levels, but in the programme Ian pointed out it only took 3 years to totally deplete spurdog in Scottish waters and by the time the Marine Directorate is ready to take any action, it will be far too late.

A POLICY FOR SHARKS

At a recent meeting with the Marine Directorate we learnt that they are intending to develop a "Policy on Sharks" which will update existing policies into an overarching document that sets out their position on sharks.

The principle aim of the policy is to find a solution that will, in effect, constitute a ban on directed fisheries for all shark species in Scottish waters by all vessels under Scottish Jurisdiction.

SSACN was given an assurance that it would be involved at all levels of discussion in the formulation of the Policy on Sharks and it is hoped that the Policy will be completed before the end of this year.

THE END OF FINNING

Hopefully 2008 will be the year when the killing by Scottish registered fishing vessels of sharks just for their fins will cease for ever.

Scotland has issued 9 special permits which allow this unnecessary brutality.

One-third of European sharks qualify for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and five Scottish species are critically endangered.

Along with SOS, the 'Save Our Sharks' organization, SSACN responded to the EU's community plan of action on sharks (CPOA) which will look at all aspects of shark management and will hopefully increase the protection on all elasmobranchs.

The results are expected later this year.

"Most Scottish shark species are classed as critically endangered yet none are afforded any protection."

Scottish Marine Bill consultation

The Government recently published its consultation on a Scottish Marine Bill - an important step towards effective management and protection of Scotland's seas.

SSACN, as members of the Sustainable Seas Task Force were involved in helping

shape the content and detail.

We especially welcome the proposed powers to establish marine protected areas for species and habitats.

However, in our response we have noted that we feel the current proposals are really

too vague regarding the makeup, membership and powers of the Scottish Marine Regions, which we feel should be representative of all local interests and not just reflect the interests of the dominant commercial activities.



Give Fish A Chance (GFAC)

When deciding whether a fish is a suitable size to take for the table many anglers use the government prescribed MLS (minimum landing size) as a guideline.

Unfortunately, MLS bears no relationship to the maturity of a species so SSACN have developed a table of 'GFAC' sizes to enable responsible anglers to voluntarily help ensure the future of a species by only taking fish which have had a chance to breed.

The following is an example of the table

Species	At Risk Rating	EU Legislated MLS - Cm	SSACN - GFAC Voluntary - Cm
Bass	3	36	45
Bream (Black)	2	None	30
Brill	4	None	40
Coalfish / Saithe	3	35	60
Cod	4	35	50
Common Skate	5		
Conger	4	None	90
Dab	3	None	25
European Eel	4	None	55
Flounder	2	None	30
Grey Mullet	4	None	45

You can download full details from www.ssacn.org or get a pdf version from <http://tinyurl.com/3qjp4c>

The SSACN Spurdog Tagging Programme

www.ssacn.org/ssacn-spurdog-tagathon

Like many Scottish sharks, spurdog stocks are in trouble. Though they used to be found in huge numbers in Scottish waters they are now at 5% of their original numbers and now only exist in refuge populations.

Anecdotal evidence from anglers suggests that certain Scottish lochs may hold some of these refuge populations, but the Marine Directorate require more evidence before they are willing to take any action to protect them.

To gather this evidence, SSACN are undertaking a tagging programme which will be carried out in two phases. In phase 1 we will tag the fish with standard plastic darts and the information will be collated by the UK shark tagging programme; In Phase 2 will begin an enhanced programme using satellite tags, this will be administered by the Government's marine scientists at the Fisheries Research Services (FRS). For this we need to raise £25,000 to pay for tags and satellite time.

Once the evidence is gathered we hope this region will become a marine protected area (MPA) as this will also protect the critically endangered common skate populations.

To promote the programme we are organizing the SSACN Spurdog Tagathon 15th - 16th of November in order to tag as many spurdog as possible from the shore and boat in Loch Sunart.

If you fancy joining what looks like to be (judging by the response) a fantastic weekend then please register by emailing tagathon@ssacn.org

The Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network

To Join SSACN, offer your services or to make donations please write to

The Secretary (SSACN)
62 Lounsdale Drive
Paisley
Renfrewshire PA2 9ED

Or email contact@ssacn.org

Or visit us at www.ssacn.org

Recreational sea angling is a selective, environmentally friendly and low-impact fishing activity; it is the # 1 coastal recreation activity in Scotland and is of great social and economic importance.

Scotland should be a major sea angling centre based around species that are not readily available elsewhere in the British Isles, but lack of stocks through inefficient and ineffective fisheries management has left many species virtually extinct and many areas barren and fishless.

SSACN is a Charity registered in Scotland which campaigns and works with all bodies for the continual improvement and regeneration of Scotland's marine environment with a special focus on those areas of interest to sea anglers.



Fish for the Future.

A registered Scottish charity RegNo. SC039015