



**Scottish Shark Tagging Programme**  
protecting Scotland's sharks!



# SSACN Newsletter

## Midsummer & Sharkatag 2010

The Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network (SSACN) is a registered Scottish Charity - Reg No. SC039015

We are staffed and run by volunteers who work passionately to help ensure conservation issues affecting sea anglers, are brought to the attention of Governments, fisheries policy makers and all other commercial and recreational users of the marine environment

Main Pic ::  
Our Secretary, Denis Kelly with a personal best Tope, which was also the largest Tope caught at Sharkatag 2010





*Welcome to this round up of some of SSACN's activities to date this year.*

So far our efforts have mainly been directed towards two major projects – The Scottish Shark Tagging Programme and developing a standard process for undertaking near-shore stock surveys.

Another major demand on our resources has been responding to many consultations, especially in giving written and verbal evidence as the Marine (Scotland) Bill worked it's way through Holyrood.

This year we also piloted a new tagging event at Crinan; this combined with Tagthon and Sharkatag provides a strong foundation for our Scottish Shark Tagging Programme. ([www.tagsharks.com](http://www.tagsharks.com))

Sharkatag 2010 again showed the tremendous commitment sea anglers have to their sport and conservation - most encouragingly, we welcomed a good number of novices and juniors.

In the past three years SSACN has grown quite substantially, this is down to the hard work of a number of volunteers and terrific support from yourselves – we are extremely grateful to all concerned.

### ***The SSACN Trustees***

***July 2010***

#### **Upcoming Events :**

SSACN AGM – November 2010 date tba

Tagathon – 13th/14th November 2010

Skate Tagging Weekend: 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> April 2011

Sharkatag – 24<sup>th</sup> -26<sup>th</sup> June 2011

Keep an eye out for more details on [www.ssacn.org](http://www.ssacn.org) and [www.tagsharks.com](http://www.tagsharks.com)

*Our next newsletter will focus on the projects and initiatives SSACN are involved in.*

The fact that children take place in Sharkatag also attracted CBBC/BBC's Newsround programme this year.



*Presenter Leah with Kiera and Bradley*

If you'd like to be reasonably certain a fish has had at least one chance to breed before taking it for the table, please check out our voluntary 'Give Fish A Chance' guidelines on [www.ssacn.org](http://www.ssacn.org)

SSACN has no paid officers; we are a purely voluntary organisation and we are dependent on our Membership and Sponsors for the funds we need to fight the sea angling conservation cause.

For a visiting angler's view of Scottish sea angling and some of the challenges it faces, see 'Terry's Story on page 6.

*P.S. If you wish to volunteer your help, ask questions or send any comments, please email [contact@ssacn.org](mailto:contact@ssacn.org)*

**Please consider making a donation or taking out a Membership. See our website for details [www.ssacn.org](http://www.ssacn.org)**

If you spot any errors, omissions or mistakes they are of course unintentional and totally the fault of the Editor – you can email any corrections etc to [contact@ssacn.org](mailto:contact@ssacn.org).

*Front page courtesy of Badpanda Graphics and all those who provided their images.*

## What is SSACN all about ?

### Our Mission

To work through advocacy, education, research and action for the regeneration of near shore fish stocks and marine environments.

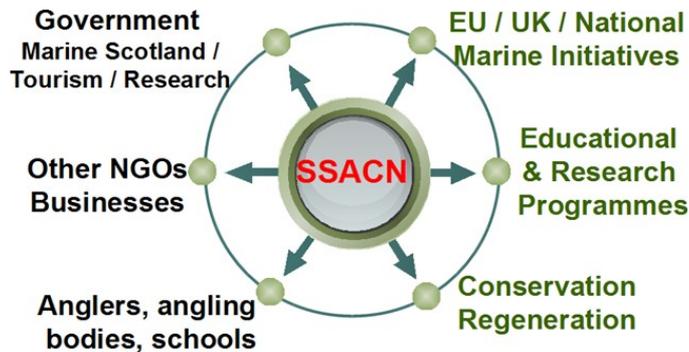
### What we do

Develop and undertake a variety of initiatives around :

- **Education and awareness** publishing best practices, information sheets and items on our web sites.
- **Environmental awareness** activities such as beach cleans, egg-case hunts, species surveys etc.
- **Lobbying** for the regeneration of fish stocks and representation for angling in fisheries management.
- **Research Projects** aimed at furthering understanding near shore fish stocks and issues affecting them.
- **Running Events** to communicate our activities or to gather the data necessary to support our research.

### Our approach

At SSACN we realize this cannot be achieved solely through our own energies and advocacy so we work in partnership with a variety of other bodies on a variety of projects to find practical solutions to the issues.



### Who Benefits ?

Everyone - anglers, divers, tourists, commercial sectors, service industries, coastal and national economies etc, will benefit if the quality and diversity of life in our seas is returned to something like it once was.

**Perhaps most importantly, sea angling will provide an enjoyable experience for generations to come.**

## Projects

The quality of the near-shore marine environment, stocks of species of interest to sea anglers and the sea angling experience itself has deteriorated drastically.

We are working at a variety of levels in order to try and ensure those environments and stocks are regenerated; a couple of the key projects are :

- The Scottish Shark Tagging Programme - a long term initiative aimed at gathering data on species of sharks, skates and rays found in Scottish waters.
- SISP – Scottish Industry Science Partnership – we are the industry lead in the partnership researching the development and evaluation of methods for surveying fish populations in nearshore waters. This is the first time sea angling interests have been the subject of a research topic within the SISP.

More information on these and other projects may be found at [www.ssacn.org/projects](http://www.ssacn.org/projects) meanwhile we'd like to give a little more detail on our schools programme.

### Schools Programme

SSACN is keen to help educate Scottish children about the fish they have in their local waters and as part of this we have been visiting primary schools running education and awareness events focussing on shark species.



A classroom based session on sharks, skates and rays in Scottish waters, what makes them different, and how they have developed to be the effective and impressive hunters they are.

Above – Drumlenbull Primary

An eggcase hunt where classes go to a beach to look for eggcases and then identify them back in the classroom. This information can be used to identify which species are breeding in local areas.



Above – Aringour Primary (Coll)

**From the feedback, these have proved to be very popular with teachers and children alike and we are looking forward to extending them in the near future.**

Email [contact@ssacn.org](mailto:contact@ssacn.org) if you think your school may be interested in getting involved.

## Sharkatag 2010

Once again the venue for Sharkatag was the western end of The Solway in South West Scotland and the event ran from the 18th to the 20th of June.

Sharkatag involved volunteer anglers operating out of four centres – Brighthouse Bay, Drummore, Sandhead and Whithorn taking part from the shore (6), in kayaks (28) and in boats (53).

### Results

The number of anglers was on a par with last year and although it was great to see so many regulars, the numbers of new faces was also very encouraging, unfortunately, the weather proved somewhat difficult on the Saturday and Sunday and many of the boats opted to stay inshore.

Whether this is due to a change in the migration pattern of the mackerel, or some other cause is open to question at the moment.

It also appears to show that smoothhound and bull huss stocks are increasing.

As with last year, the TV and radio channels gave us good coverage, with the BBC running a reprise of last years Sharkatag on Breakfast TV, CBBC Newsround coming along and Border STV showing Sharkatag on their news programmes. Sharkatag was also featured on the BBC TV web home page.

Scotland was once a premier European sea angling destination - two decades ago there were over 30 major fishing festivals and competitions held around the Scottish coastline. These attracted thousands of visiting anglers and millions of pounds in income to the fragile economies of many coastal communities.

	Top	Smoothhound	Spurdog	Bullhuss	Ray	Centre Total
<b>Brighthouse</b>	1	1	0	3	4	9
<b>Drummore</b>	36	8	0	0	3	47
<b>Whithorn</b>	53	4	11	33	2	103
<b>Sandhead</b>	8	5	0	3	1	17
<b>Total 2010</b>	98	18	11	39	10	176
<b>Total 2009</b>	182	9	10	13	6	220

*\* Correct at 30.06.10 but a few returns were outstanding.*

The overall numbers of fish tagged was down around 10% on last year (now we have most of the outstanding returns in), however, 449 rods fishing over the three days managed to catch 840 fish (excluding lesser spotted dogfish), of which 176 were tagged.

Once again tope didn't arrive in their expected numbers and their numbers were down almost 50% on last year.

The Solway is one of the few inshore areas which still has reasonable residual fish stocks of interest to sea anglers.

**Sharkatag, which brings close to £50K in revenue to the region over the weekend, shows what can be done where the angling opportunities still exist.**



*A few photos from Sharkatag to try and give a flavour of the event*

*more can be found at [www.tagsharks.com/tagging-programmes/sharkatag-2010-photo-call](http://www.tagsharks.com/tagging-programmes/sharkatag-2010-photo-call)*

## The Scottish Shark Tagging Programme (SSTP)

The Scottish Shark Tagging Programme is a long term initiative aimed at gathering data on species of sharks, skates and rays found in Scottish waters.

Thanks to a funding package put together by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the Argyll and the Islands LEADER Programme we have been able to accelerate and broaden the scope of the programme.

The SSTP has several goals :

- To set up a new database for Scotland to record tagging data on all species of shark.
- To collect more detailed data on the common skate and spurdog populations by tagging fish with sophisticated data logging and satellite tags.
- Support the work of scientists and academic institutions on other inshore fish species of interest to anglers such as pollack and coalfish.
- To encourage the use of sustainable angling and commercial fishing practices.
- To increase the general public's awareness of the issues affect Scotland's shark species

### Top Taggers

As a small reward to anyone who reports the details of any initial / recapture tagging data, the SSTP awards 'Top Tagger' fishing caps.



In order to highlight the level of effort, the caps are awarded at three levels; anglers providing data on :

- 10 sharks will earn a bronze logo cap,
- 50 sharks will receive a silver logo hat and
- and for those who reach the magical 100 – they will receive GOLD.

A list of all those who have achieved each level is at <http://www.tagsharks.com/top-taggers/cap-awards>.



Join SSTP on Facebook and keep up with what's happening  
<http://www.tagsharks.com/facebook>

### 'Tagger of the Month'

The SSTP also runs a 'Tagger of the Month' programme which recognizes the individual angler who has contributed the most data to the SSTP database during a particular month.

Their profile is displayed on the front page of the SSTP website in recognition and past winners of the award are recorded in the SSTP Hall of Fame at <http://www.tagsharks.com/hall-of-fame>.



A number of Top Tagger caps were awarded at Sharkatag -

The recipients are (Back L-R) Gordon Stewart, Les McBride, Guy Stewart, Ian Burret and (Front L-R) Davie Murray, Tony Voss, Graham Boardman, Gordon Goldie

### Quick Summary of the SSTP to date

We are currently loading historic data from the Glasgow Skate and the UK Shark Tagging Programmes.

The following numbers are based solely on data entered to the SSTP since its inception.

Number of anglers contributing data :	136
Total number of entries on database :	867
Number of recaptures :	59
Total number of tagged fish :	808
% recapture rate :	6.8%

**Species Tagged :** Blonde ray, bull huss , common skate, tope, spurdog, smoothhound and thornback ray.

**Species Recaptured :** Common skate, spurdog, tope

The SSTP project involves members of SSACN, other sea anglers, commercial fishermen, the general public, marine scientists and other tagging programmes.

**We are extremely grateful for each and everyone's contributions.**

## Terry's Story

Recently an angler submitted 10 records to the SSTP database as part of a weekends fishing.

Not too unusual in itself, but 8 of the fish were actually recaptures ! Had those fish not gone back alive before, Terry's weekend would not have been so special.

So we contacted Terry and asked him to provide us with a short article about himself, his fishing and his views.

[BEGINS]

**My name is Terry Morris**, I'm married to Eileen and we live in Newcastle. Eileen is not a total fishing widow, she fishes too! In fact we spent our honeymoon fishing.



I have now retired and this has given me the opportunity to fish, fish, fish. An understanding wife helps a lot !

I have visited the Mull of Galloway for over thirty years and enjoy my yearly "Boys" holiday to Northern Norway for Large Cod and Halibut, as the once abundant cod have seemingly disappeared, not just from our coastline but whilst boat fishing too, so I am now happy to "Catch and Release".

I have fished for Skate in the Oban area for the last ten years, but returned this year to the Sound of Jura having spent a fabulous week there last year, we hired the same cottage on the shore line and had a mooring for the week for my boat, "Jessie-Lou" named for our granddaughter.

Our recent trip resulted in numerous fish, our largest an untagged female estimated at 180 lb but the majority of fish were male and they seem to give a greater fight.

My aim is to get the Skate back in the water in less than three minutes this includes removing the barbless hook, measuring and cleaning up the specimen, retrieving any tag data, then safely returning it to the water via a piece of trawling net, which is an invaluable piece of equipment to help fully support the fish for its return.

I feel that more credit should be given to organisations such as SSACN, common skate along with some other

fish require to be protected from over exploitation, these amazing creatures could and so easily and will disappear if people are not educated.

Articles appearing regularly in our press with a dead or distressed fish and headlined "A catch of a lifetime" weighing 180lbs, serve no purpose

During my fishing life, I have first hand experience that fishing numbers have diminished, the endless work of conservation societies and tagging schemes are in my opinion the way we must proceed, so as future generations can enjoy the seas and the wondrous creatures' they behold.

FISH FOR THE FUTURE so very important. [ENDS]

## So who benefits

Terry and Eileen – they obviously love their fishing  
Their granddaughter when she gets to take Jessie Lou out.  
The economies of the Mull of Galloway and Oban  
All the manufacturers of the equipment Terry buys.  
All the service industries – food, petrol, bait etc

### And the fish all went back alive

## Did you know ?

- Spurdog have the longest gestation period of any fish
- Scotland has over 7000 miles of coastline
- 100,000+ sea anglers fish in Scottish waters each year.
- Tope fins are used in many countries to make soup.
- SSACN has over 500 Members and over 300 followers on Facebook.
- An average of 300 people visit our web sites daily.
- 32 people have contributed to the material on our sites – YOU CAN TOO – [contact@ssacn.org](mailto:contact@ssacn.org)

## In Closing

We'd like to thank - all our Members for their support; all those who have helped raise money for their fantastic efforts; all those who have kindly made donations of money or material; and those who have done a hundred and one other things; and of course

**All the Volunteers who have worked so hard.**

## The Management Team of SSACN.