



Agenda Item C5
Recreational Angling Report
Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Quarterly report for the period May 2024- September 2024

Overview

The shore based mackerel season in Kent has been disappointing this year, with low numbers of fish being caught despite what looked like good conditions and water clarity. Anglers have voiced their concerns over this, to both Officers and on fishing forums.

Anglers have been able to leave baits out for long periods with little or no damage when in previous years the shore crabs would have stripped the baits in minutes. This has led to further questions about what is happening on the District's shores.

KEIFCA Progress

In May I was appointed as the part-time Angling and Commercial Liaison Officer for KEIFCA. Since then, I have completed twenty-eight patrols to various shore venues and piers, spoken to the management on the piers, and left contact details and minimum-size stickers/cards. These patrols have been in both Kent and Essex. I have interacted with 650 anglers, talking about minimum sizes, and concerns that they have affecting the angling in their local area, and made sure that the anglers have the minimum size sticker and are aware of the current bass regulations and the new Bass FMP.

I visited the angling shops throughout the district, leaving both business cards and minimum-size stickers for them to hand out, discussing various local problems. I have contacted angling clubs, to introduce myself and offer to come to club meetings, to speak on behalf of the IFCA on any issues, one club has taken me up on the offer, and others have suggested that I join them at competitions, this resulted into me attending four competitions. I have an invitation to attend the 52nd Gravesend Fishing Experiment angling competition at the end of September.

A meeting with representatives from the Angling Trust was arranged, where concerns for the angling within the district were discussed. Further meetings are being organized for the future.

I also attended via zoom, the "All about the Bass" conference that was hosted by Essex University. This gave me useful insight into how Bass interacted with other species and their environment.

Kent Angling Summary

On the Kent shore, bass and smoothhounds were the main targets, with anglers landing good fish. Good catches of thornback rays were reported. From June onwards, the North Kent coast became unfishable on most tides with large rafts of green weed moving up and down the shoreline. The anglers who fished successfully were able to capture good smoothhounds.

The lesser spotted dogfish, stingrays, European eels, and conger eels also make up part of the catches taken by anglers during this period.

In late July and August, anglers started targeting the mini species in the district, with wrasse, red mullet, and blennies featuring among the fish landed.

The mackerel fishing on the shore was disappointing, leaving anglers wondering why.

Essex Angling Summary

Smoothhounds to about 15lb and large sting rays were caught during the first part of the quarter, with bass, European eels, flounders and sole making up the rest of the sport. Pouting was being caught on the Essex coast at the beginning of September. Mackerel are being caught off the Essex piers with small congers featuring in the catches.

Inner Thames and River Medway

Fishing in the inner Thames and on the River Medway has had a good showing of bass and flounders, European eels are also appearing in catches. Smoothhounds are being caught further up the rivers than normal with some being caught just under the M2 Medway bridge in brackish water, dover soles have also been regularly featured in catches.

Boat fishing

Charter boat fishing has been varied. Bass have been caught in good numbers and into double figures, and earlier in the year, the two fish bag limits were easily met. Smoothhounds have provided good sport, with the chance of a double-figure fish high on the cards. Most of these are being caught and released to provide sport for another day. Mackerel and thornbacks have also been caught, along with lesser spotted dogfish.