

Welcome

to this the latest issue of SSACN's newsletter.

As usual our volunteers have been very busy with policy work, undertaking a number of projects and gathering data through our tagging programme.

There were some major achievements but also a major disappointment – Sharkatag – the weather claimed 2 of the 3 days but still some of the volunteer anglers stuck it out !

Marine Scotland Science has just released its Clyde Ecosystem Review – those involved in fisheries management will now have to accept the Clyde does not contain meaningful stocks of interest to anglers.

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Any errors or omissions are down to the Editor - please email contact@ssacn.org if you spot any.



www.ssacn.org

www.tagsharks.com



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scottishsharktaggingprogramme



SSACN



In the following pages we'll try to give you a flavour of what we have been doing, but of course, should you require detailed information on any particular aspect, you'll find it on either of our websites – www.ssacn.org or www.tagsharks.com.



If you have any queries, questions or wish to volunteer your services, you can always reach us by emailing contact@ssacn.org.



SSTP



Email

contact@ssacn.org

The BIG Questions

As we were putting this together, a new report by Marine Scotland Science came out suggesting the Clyde is demonstrating some signs of recovery <http://bit.ly/Mws5bd> and that the Government wants all sectors to work together openly and transparently to take the necessary actions.

But given the attitude of the mobile commercial sector in the past when it was claimed they did not want white fish back in the Clyde because they eat nephrops (prawns).

Is that a realistic goal, or is the Government trying to be seen to be addressing the issue but without taking meaningful action ?

Can the Firth of Clyde once again become a national asset ?

The next big question

Will sea anglers now have a voice in the management of inshore fish stocks ?

From the Scottish Government

In a recent press release regarding the Clyde Ecosystem Review, Fisheries Secretary Richard Lochhead said:

“The Firth of Clyde has been a rich and productive fishing ground for Scottish fishermen for hundreds of years, however intensive fishing in the twentieth century has made an impact.....

“What this report indicates is that with careful, collective management **it may be possible to improve biodiversity and nurture the Firth back to a more diverse fishery, able to support mature fish stocks that can be sustainably harvested.**

“I believe the Clyde can once again be a national asset, however there are no quick fixes.....

“In the coming months we will engage widely – including with conservation bodies, fishermen and local communities – to agree on our shared vision for the future of the Clyde..... “

Since 2006 we have asked for sea angling and conservation bodies to have a direct input to inshore fisheries management, if the Government is serious about its vision, all sectors will have to work together.

SSACN's Thoughts

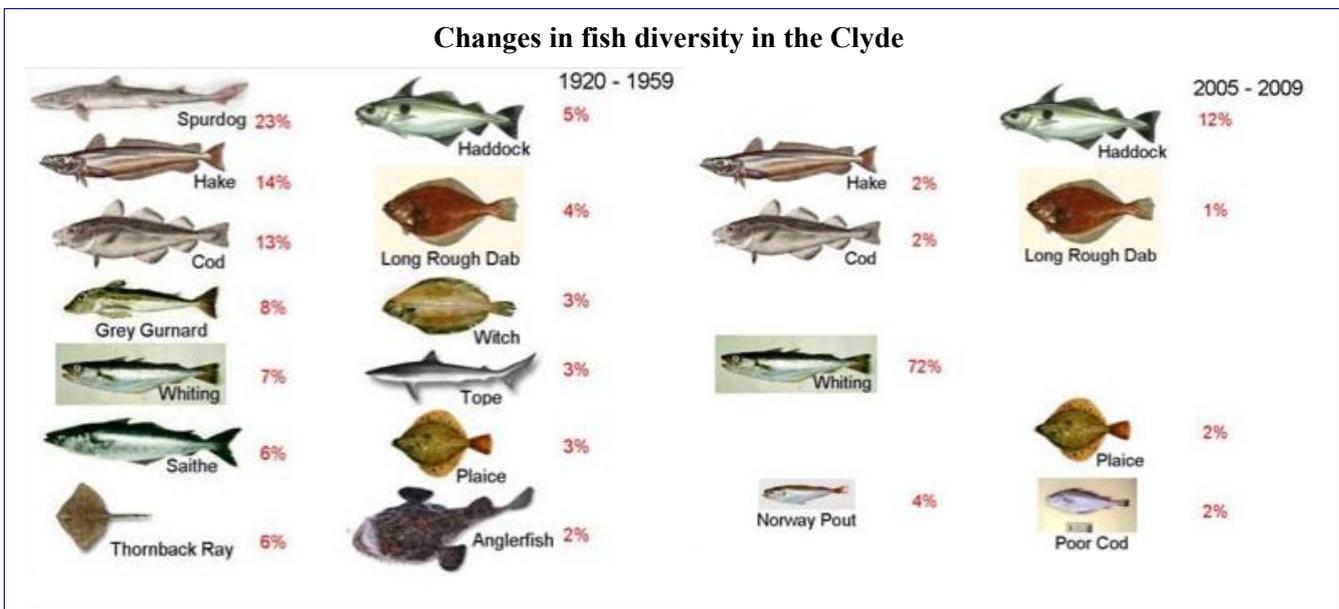
The publication of this report is welcomed as for the first time, the Government is publicly admitting there is a big problem.

But this is not new - In February 2008 SSACN held a Lunchtime Event in Holyrood and presented a paper detailing <http://bit.ly/Lgkmwa> how the Clyde fish stocks were being depleted and that if the Clyde was to stand any chance of being regenerated, the focus should be on attaining '**Best Value**' for its resources and not adhering to outdated and outmoded commercial fisheries and management practices- <http://bit.ly/MU2wRH>

We have always recognised that restoring the marine environment should be built on sound science – to that end we introduced our tagging programmes and researched methods for assessing inshore stocks.

In proposing Angling Regeneration Centres in 2006 - <http://bit.ly/L1ZVI4> and our MPA submissions we have continually suggested means to pilot the effectiveness of a combined policy / science solution

But with the main focus being increasing commercial exploitation opportunities, we are concerned that the interests of the recreational sector will still be, at best, secondary.



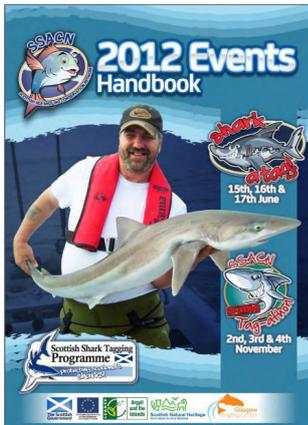
News from the SSTP



A Statutory Instrument (SI) has now been created to protect 26 vulnerable species of sharks, skates and rays in Scottish waters.

These fish will now have protection over and above that under EU legislation.

Analysis of SSTP data was used to show sea angling has minimal impact on stocks – the contribution of volunteer anglers was recognised by Cabinet Secretary Lochhead.



Download a copy from our website's Reading Room pages.



Don't forget the spurdog tagging event to be held on the 2nd, 3rd & 4th November 2012 at Loch Sunart & Loch Etive

See – www.tagsharks.com for details.

Sharkatag 2012

With fantastic fishing being reported in the days leading up to the Event expectations were high but a deep depression crossing the country resulted in unseasonal gales that forced us to cancel fishing on both the Friday and Saturday of Sharkatag this year.

When anglers were able to get out fishing was mixed between the venues - the Isle of Whithorn anglers had a great time with tope, huss in good numbers and a few spurdog; most of the Drummore boats had a few tope each, but unfortunately those fishing out of Brighthouse weren't as successful.

However, on the plus side there were some memorable fish caught including a 54lb tope for 13 year old Kyle MacAleese, a 73lb fish for Jason Kerrigan and a 63 pounder for Graham Paisley, caught just a few hundred yards from the shore.



Graham Paisley with his 63lb tope

An area of concern

Over the past few years, what used to be the main stock of tope ie: male fish in the 30 -35lb range haven't shown in the same numbers.

Whether this is through commercial overfishing elsewhere or changes in movement patterns is a big question.

The ongoing efforts off volunteer anglers will be essential if we are to find out more information.

Sharkatag goes International

In June we were proud to announce a collaboration with Sportvisserij Nederland (Royal Dutch Angling Association) to introduce Sharkatag - into Dutch waters.



Shark stocks in the two countries have opposite records, whilst Scottish stocks have been in decline through a historic lack of political willpower and fisheries mismanagement, sharks in Dutch waters were very scarce until 10 years ago.

The Dutch Sharkatag will take place August 22th 23th and 24th 2012.

Increasing stocks of Smoothhound

One thing noted by both SSACN and Sportvisserij Nederland is an apparent northern migration of smoothhound, with increasing numbers of the species being caught each year.

Whether this is due to decreased competition for food as cod stocks have declined, decreased commercial pressure, or northern waters getting warmer, both parties hope the collaboration will help gather data on the make up of the stocks and their migration patterns, quicker and more effectively



Marine Policy Issues

There have been many consultations and requests for input these past few months, the 'Consultations' section on the SSACN Home Page lists several of them.

In this newsletter we will focus on the Government's MPA process which has taken up a tremendous amount of our resources.

We realize our goals cannot be achieved solely through our own energies and advocacy, so when we work in partnership with another body on a project we do expect equal commitment.

SSACN and Marine Protected Areas

The Marine (Scotland) Act contains powers to designate Marine Protected Areas – (MPAs) – areas of the marine environment protected against further deterioration or degradation of certain features.

As part of the process, third parties, could submit proposals for Nature Conservation or Demonstration & Research MPAs.

For over a year, SSACN volunteers have been attending MPA workshops to seek protection for endangered shark species and the 'setting aside' of an area from destructive commercial practices to monitor the recovery of the marine flora and fauna within it.

To that end, SSACN made Nature Conservation MPA proposals in Argyll from the Sound of Jura to Loch Sunart and

a Demonstration & Research MPA for Luce Bay in Dumfries and Galloway.

These proposals are now being assessed Marine Scotland for their suitability and how well they meet the criteria laid out in the selection guidelines.

STOP PRESS:: just before printing it was decided at a workshop that SSACN's proposals would go forward for review by Ministers in 12/12 and then if successful on to public consultation in 04/13.

Before designation, all proposed MPAs will be subject to a public consultation when details regarding the sites and the reasons for considering must be made public and feedback considered.

Our proposals are detailed in papers available through the '[Reading Room](#)' on our websites.

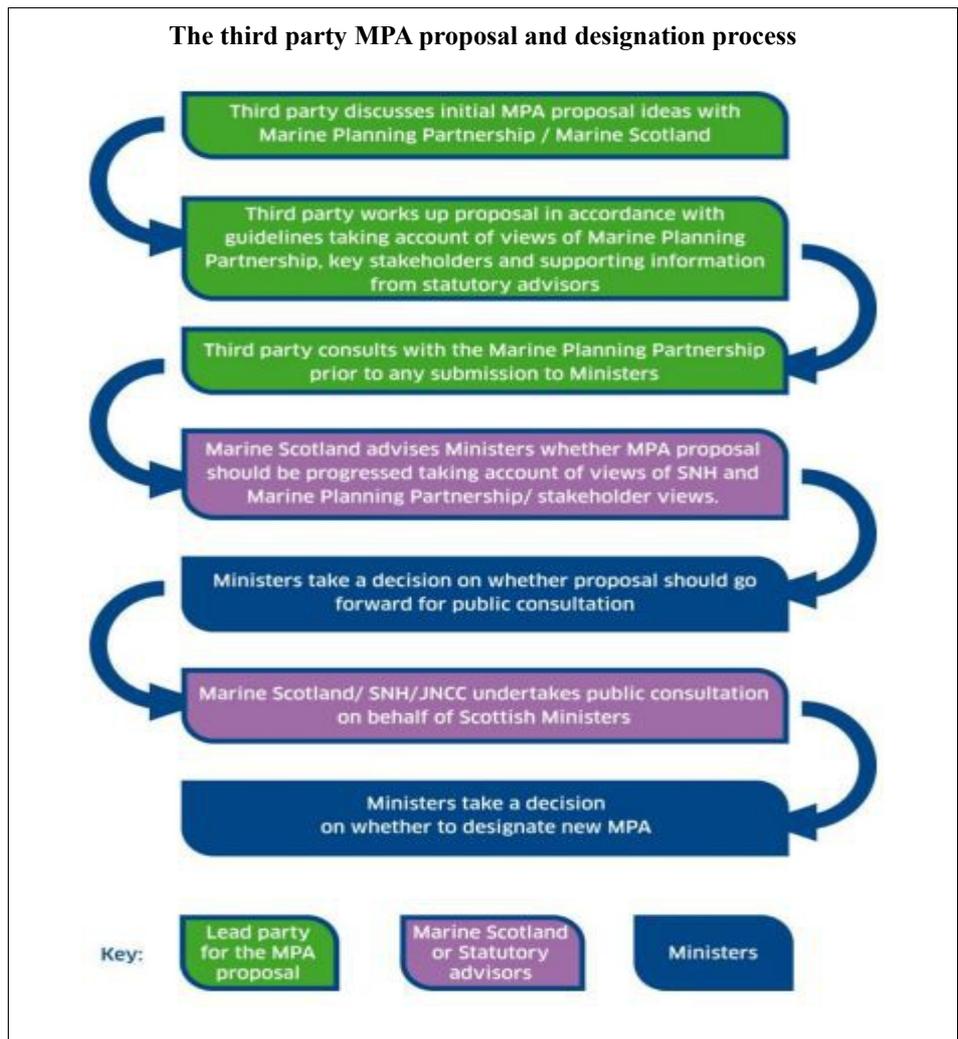
Sea Angling Strategy
A major disappointment



Following on from the launch of the Sea Angling Economic Study in 2009, Minister Lochhead set up a Strategy Group to identify the best way forward for the sport and how to realise its economic potential.

SSACN attended each meeting and although the work completed in Mar 2011, the findings were not presented to the Minister until Feb 2012.

It would appear that the Government is not as committed to recreational fishing as it is to the commercial sector.



Coaching

In June, 3 of SSACN's volunteers, Jonathon Taylor, Lewis Cowie and Steve Arnold successfully gained their Dreamstore Level 2 Coaching qualification.

Subjects covered included emergency first aid, risk assessment, working with children, adults and people with disabilities, session planning, self evaluation, feedback, and goal setting as a motivational tool and so much more.

Their success also increases SSACN's ability to further develop educational material and best practice guidance, key focal activities for us this year.

You too can get involved, email contact@ssacn.org

Best Practice Tip



Weighing fish by measuring them helps minimize any potential harm to the fish.

Use the calculators on the home pages of our web sites to 'weigh' your fish.

Just enter the measurement (in cms) of your fish and the calculator will do the rest!



Join SSACN Today

Membership to November 2013 for only £10

SSACN's volunteers contribute so much and deliver terrific results – please support their efforts and take out a membership, just visit - www.ssacn.org/membership

Educational Outreach

Our educational outreach programme continues to prove extremely popular.

Many of the primary schools and youth groups visited continue to ask for more visits to help pupils learn about the marine environment, a subject that is rarely covered under the normal curriculum.

In the last year, 341 children from 19 schools have participated in the educational visits which included both classroom and outdoor activities, including egg-case hunts, rock pooling, beach cleaning and educational games.

The success of the visits can be judged from the feedback we receive :

“It was a real pleasure to have Lewis in our school and we would hope that he would come back and work with us in the future as I’m sure we will all be combing the beaches looking for shark egg cases”
N. Maxwell, Head, Auchencairn Primary.

“It was a super visit and also helps with our Eco-Schools programme!” Margaret Heuchen, Head, Kirkbean Primary.

“My son Cameron has talked about nothing else all night, he says it was the best Beaver’s night ever and hopes you will come again” Andrew Cox, Assistant Beaver Leader.



Pupils from Park Primary, Oban after a session.

The SSACN – SSTP Doctors

Sign up to be SSACN's SSTP Project Officer and then go off and do a PhD !

SSACN's first 'sharkman' James Thorburn researching 'Movements, habitat use and sustainability of Scottish Elasmobranchs' at Aberdeen and Glasgow Uni's, looking at residential behaviour in spurdog and into population movements in both tope and spurdog through genetics, electronic tags and mark/recapture data.



And with Phase2 of the SSTP research project successfully completed by our 'sharklady' Julie Hope, she is beginning her PhD in marine benthic ecology at the University of St Andrews – after her terrific work for us, we wish all the best.

James Thorburn is also looking into life history characteristics for tope and would like to hear from any anglers willing to help gather some measurements.



In the next few months there are more major challenges and although any help is welcomed we are especially looking for volunteers in the following areas:

- Fund raising.
- Developing position papers.
- Furthering our use of social media.
- Helping with outreach activities.
- Developing an outreach programme for secondary schools

Thank You!