

Northeast Atlantic bottom-dwelling sharks and rays

Summary of population status, ICES advice and existing management
June 2008

Celtic Seas

There are currently no limits on fishing for bottom-dwelling sharks or rays in Celtic Seas. The following table reflects the first ICES advice for this region:

Common Name	Status	Advice	Notes
Angel shark	Severely depleted; locally extinct in parts of former range	Zero catch, prohibition on landing, "highest possible protection"	Once common; thought to have a high survival rate if returned to sea after capture
White skate	Severely depleted; locally extinct in most parts of Celtic Seas	Zero catch, prohibition on landing, "highest possible protection"	Thought to have a high survival rate if returned to sea after capture
Common skate	Depleted. Once widely distributed, now rarely found	No targeted fishing, minimize bycatch	Remains off NW Scotland, west of Ireland and in deeper waters
Undulate ray	Signs of regional depletion; uncertain	No targeted fishing	Patchy distribution, cause for concern
Thornback ray	Stable or increasing	Status quo catch	Measures suggested to prevent overfishing
Spotted ray	Stable or increasing	Status quo catch	Measures suggested to prevent overfishing
Small-eyed ray	Abundant in Bristol Channel	Status quo catch; monitoring needed	Restricted distribution
Lesser spotted dogfish	Stable or increasing in all areas	Status quo catch	Current fisheries appear sustainable
Greater spotted dogfish	Locally stable and increasing in VIIa	Status quo catch; monitoring needed	Restricted range; not well sampled
Smoothhounds	Uncertain data show abundance increasing	Status quo catch plus measures to prevent overfishing	Relatively productive shark; problems w/species identification
Cuckoo ray (VIa)	Relatively abundant	Status quo catch	Further studies needed.
Cuckoo ray (VII)	Uncertain	None; more information needed	Studies needed
Blonde ray	Uncertain. May be vulnerable to localized depletion	None; more information needed	Vulnerability based on species' tendency to aggregate
Sandy ray	Uncertain in VI; stable or increasing in VII b,c & h-k	None; need data	Not well sampled
Shagreen ray	Uncertain	None; need data	Not well sampled

North Sea, Skagerrak and English Channel

EU catch of North Sea skates and rays was first limited through a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) in 1999. After several reductions, this TAC is finally low enough to restrict fishing.

ICES produced advice for skates and rays in this region for the first time in 2005, recommending zero catches for the species taken as a group. Reporting skate and ray catch by species is now required for several species and ICES is advising accordingly.

There are no management measures in place for the bottom-dwelling sharks (catsharks, dogfish, smoothhounds and angel sharks) in this region.

Common Name	Status	Advice	Notes
Angel shark	Eradicated from North Sea & eastern English Channel	No fisheries or landings; "highest possible protection"	Thought to have a high survival rate if returned to sea after capture
Common skate	Depleted; found only & rarely in Northern N. Sea	No targeted fishing; minimize bycatch	Maximum landing length of 100cm would benefit this large species
Undulate ray	Uncertain; reasons for concern	No target fishing; minimize bycatch	Patchy distribution; prone to localized depletion
Spotted ray	Stable or increasing	Fishing should be closely monitored and not increase	Status fluctuating without trends
Starry ray	Stable	Fishing should be closely monitored and not increase	Catch rates recently decreased slightly
Cuckoo ray	Uncertain	Fishing should be closely monitored and not increase	Abundance declined since early 1990s; stable in recent years
Smoothhounds (including starry smoothhound)	Uncertain data show abundance increasing	Status quo catch; measures are needed to prevent overfishing	Relatively productive shark able to withstand current fishing; new markets developing
Lesser spotted dogfish	Increasing	Status quo catch	Current fisheries appear sustainable; high survival after discard
Thornback ray (IVc)	Stable or increasing	Status quo catch; deter fishing on spawning aggregations	Prone to localized depletion due to tendency to aggregate; Most spawning in IVc
Thornback ray (IVa,b)	Uncertain	None; more information needed	Prone to localized depletion due to tendency to aggregate
Blonde ray	Uncertain	None; more information needed	Prone to localized depletion due to tendency to aggregate

Bay of Biscay and Iberian Waters

There are no currently no limits on fishing for bottom-dwelling sharks or rays in these waters.

ICES warns that limited information on population status coupled with generally low reproductive potential warrant a cautious management approach.

ICES advises that **2009 landings be held at or reduced from average landings in 2002–2006 for lesser-spotted dogfish as well as skates and rays** (collectively).

This represents the first ICES advice for this region.