



Jan 2013

Dear Federation members and patrons,
Hello and belated wishes to you all for the new year and a warm welcome to all clubs re-affiliating.

CFSA Christmas Shore Competition fished on the 15th/16th December

1. Ian Bidgood (St Columb SAC) 3 B Rockling 01.01.11lb, Bull Huss 12.05.15lb, 180.501%, £45
2. Andrew Drysdale (Looe SAA) Whiting, 01.04.04lb, Pouting 00.13.10lb, 177.039%, £25
3. Sid Bennett (St Columb SAC) Whiting, 01.09.09lb, 125.16%, £20
4. Steve Rodding (Padstow SAC) Flounder 01.09.12lb, 80.43%, £10

Only four members weighed fish
2013 WMN Qualifiers – Ian Bidgood & Sid Bennett

CFSA 2013 Affiliation Fees

Please note that the 31st January is the deadline for clubs and personal members to pay their affiliation fees thus ensuring their continued membership for 2013.
All clubs taking up the £5 million Public Liability Insurance should furnish me with a list of their member's names to ensure their cover.

CFSA 2013 Annual General Meeting

Please note this will take place on Saturday 26th January at the St Dennis Working Men's Club with a 2pm start.

The Agenda and proposals have already been sent to the club Secretaries, please ensure a member from your club attends with your mandate for voting on the proposals. I have as yet received no nominations for the two Assistant Recorders positions, will all members please give this situation serious thought.

These positions ensure cover for the Recorder when he is unavailable to administer weigh-in's to receive notifications from members the day before departure on Federation Boat Competitions and receive notification of potential record and 100% fish.

Return of Cups and Trophies

Will all members who were awarded Cups and Trophies in 2012 please contact myself on 07814989707 to arrange their return.

They were presented in a clean condition so please return them in a clean condition at the very latest at the AGM thus ensuring they can be sent to the engravers in good time. I thank you for your anticipated co-operation in this matter.

2013 presentation & Buffet evening

This will be held at the St Dennis Working Men's Club on Saturday 16th March starting at 7.30pm.

A free Buffet will be provided and the Executive Committee would very much appreciate all members who have trophies to be present to collect them.

A raffle will be held to offset the cost of the buffet and all senior members attending are invited to bring along a raffle prize on the night.

BASS Magazine December 2012

The Federations Conservation Officer, Mr Malcolm Gilbert, has written a very interesting article in the magazine regarding the catch and release of Bass.

A written copy is with this Shockleader but for those of you who do not receive a written copy then it can be seen on the Website of BASS , www.ukbass.com

CFSA Diary Dates 2013

26th January - AGM St Dennis Working Men's Club - 2pm

16th March – Buffet and Presentation St Dennis Working Men's Club – 7.30pm

Jan/Feb/March – Shore and Boat Recorders Trophies

Club Diary Dates 2013

8th/9th June - Camborne AA Open Championship

28th/29th June – Grenville Arms SAC Open

6th/7th July Padstow & District SAC Open Competition.

20th October – MBAS Open

14th/15th December – Mawnan Open Flounder Completion.

Until the next Shockleader, happy and safe fishing.

Regards



Ralph

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Catch & Release

by

Malcolm Gilbert

Malcolm Gilbert takes a provocative and controversial look at the increasing culture of Catch & Release amongst recreational sea anglers targeting bass.

This article is not intended to be judgmental about voluntary Catch & Release (C&R). I firmly believe anglers must individually make up their own minds whether to practise voluntary C&R and at what level to do so. I use the word 'voluntary' to distinguish it from mandatory C&R where a fish that is less than the minimum landing size (mls) or a species that can not be legally retained, such as a sea trout or bass caught from a boat in a bass nursery area, must be returned. The notion of C&R is to be applauded from an ethical perspective, and for species like tope that do enjoy significant protection from commercial exploitation, it is entirely rational, but in the case of bass I seek to inform the process of considering the merits of C&R and provoke all bass anglers to consider the issues realistically.

C&R amongst recreational sea anglers is undoubtedly increasing. Some anglers practice C&R because they simply don't like eating fish or they would rather not have to deal with gutting and filleting their catch. However,

I believe the growing appetite for C&R is linked to the notion their action is of 'conservation value' and of benefit to the resource. What proportion of sea anglers carefully consider the rationale for C&R in an honest and objective manner is unclear and there can be little doubt that a significant proportion just go with the flow due to peer pressure.

I frequently hear anglers recounting details of a successful fishing trip (good catches) who feel compelled to then very hurriedly and pointedly add that they returned either all or most of their catch. Indeed, the emphasis is now about the release as opposed to the details of how the fish were caught. I sometimes get the feeling that an angler feels guilty at having had a successful day and feels a compelling need to purge himself in front of his peers with details of fish released, the details of which are often related just a little too emphatically. I even come across recreational anglers who boast how they returned all their bass but then stop at the fishmongers on the way home to buy some wild sea bass!

Now, here's the crunch. Will all the bass that recreational anglers are now returning, benefit the resource and help to improve the quality of recreational bass angling in the

future? This is the debate I seek to inform.

If a recreational angler experiences a good catch, he is likely to tell his close mates and makes the effort to revisit the mark again as soon as possible. Many of you will testify to this, I am sure. Commercial fishermen, motivated by earnings, may not actually call their mates to tell them where a successful catch was made, but as most operate from harbours, it is very difficult for their activities to go unnoticed and when a boat makes a good landing of bass, other commercials, who will be watching will get to know about it. They will know where the boat is working and within a single tide, more gear and more effort will be deployed on those fish. Improved catches stimulates increased effort, increased investment in gear (more nets) and bigger, faster boats.

The key point to be aware of is that whilst there are no seasonal restrictions, no restrictions in linear dimension of gill nets and no meaningful restrictions of the quantity of bass that a commercial vessel can catch and retain, any improvement to bass stocks will rapidly result in increased commercial effort. Commercial fishermen do of course applaud C&R for recreationalists (no surprises there!) and with some success have per-

sueded many within the fisheries management sector that C&R shouldn't be left for anglers to 'choose' but should be made mandatory with bag limits.

Time to look at how the bass cake has been shared over the last four decades. As numerous MAFF publications point out, prior to the mid seventies, bass was essentially 100% an angler's species. Bass didn't appear in the Defra statistics until 1995. So forty years ago recreationalists were responsible for pretty much all of the fishing mortality that was inflicted on bass stocks. By the early 1990s CEFAS & CEMARE research suggested that the commercial catch was broadly equivalent to the RSA retained catch. Since then, bass has attracted far more commercial interest and effort as access to other species has been ratcheted down due to management restrictions and TAC/quota cuts. Meanwhile, levels of C&R in the recreational fishery have escalated. Do you see where this is going? Even a senior CEFAS scientist said that the proportion of fishing mortality attributable to commercial fishing was increasing due in part to the

tonnage removed. They are simply indicative of how the annual fishing mortality – whatever it is – is split between the two users. Whilst commercials are unrestricted in what they can catch and land and the appetite for the recreational sector to practice C&R grows, the pendulum will continue to swing towards allocating a greater share of the sea bass cake to commercials.

The ICES paper on results of tagging called; *'Migrations, fishery interactions, and management units of sea bass in NW Europe'* throws some light on the split between what recreational anglers and commercials catch.

Distribution of recaptures between fisheries

Up to the end of 2005, 131 (73%) recaptured bass that were tagged and released at >36 cm inshore along the English and Welsh coasts were reported within 3 miles of the UK coast, two-thirds by commercial métiers, and one-third by recreational anglers.

So up to 2005, of every three bass released by sea anglers that were subsequently recaptured, two were recaptured by commercials. It may even be the case that with such high levels of C&R as are now being practiced by recreational bass anglers, we are helping to maintain commercial effort and keep a proportion of commercial operators in

business who would otherwise drop out of targeting bass.

Now compare the division of spoils as it is in the UK to that of the striped bass cake in the US. In the US, 80% of fishing mortality is allocated to recreationalists and 20% to commercials. So when you release a striped bass, you can be sure you are definitely contributing to the future quality of your own fishing.

What was during the 1960s and early 1970s almost entirely an RSA species, has become a significant commercial species and will become almost entirely a commercial species if RSA's appetite for C&R is not matched by equivalent conservation driven management being robustly applied to commercial exploitation.

And should a TAC eventually be implemented for bass, the lion's share of the cake will be securely sealed as commercial.

RSA, who will have already voluntarily demonstrated their appetite for C&R may have mandatory bag limits imposed in order that what they keep doesn't negatively impact the commercial exploitation of what is demonstrably a commercial species.

Ultimately, commercials will secure the 'cake' and RSA will have to be content with any crumbs that fall off the plate!

There are circumstances where C&R can certainly lead to improved quality of angling and that is where one is fortunate enough to have located a summer mark that

YEAR	RECREATIONAL % OF TAKE	COMMERCIAL % OF TAKE
1970	95	5
1990	50	50
2000	40	60
2012	30	70

increase in C&R by the recreational sector (above).

Remember, these figures are nothing to do with the actual

produces some quality fish but which attracts little or no commercial effort. Marks like this are rare, but if you are fortunate enough to know of one, practicing C&R can really help to maintain the quality of bass angling over subsequent years.

Many bass anglers catch very few bass. I've no idea what the exact figures are, but there is a rather simplistic saying that goes 95% of recreationally captured bass are caught by 10% of bass anglers. So the majority of bass anglers catch either no bass or very low numbers. This creates the impression for many, that bass are very rare and makes it difficult for them to visualise a large haul of netted bass. However, like so many species, bass do shoal up and become liable to be caught in quantities that seem almost mind blowing to those who do not come face to face with commercial bass fishing.

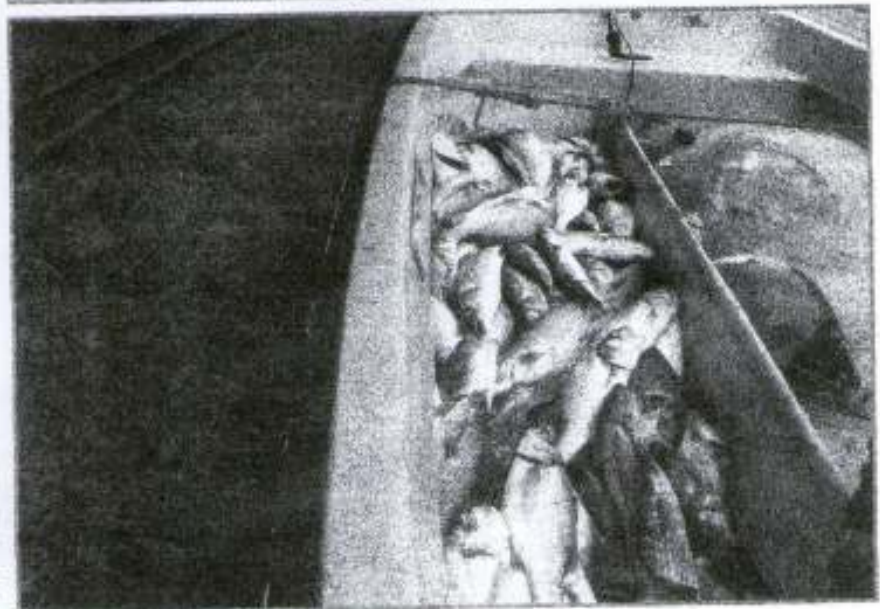
The catches pictured below are recent (within the last 12 months) but I can assure anglers that historically, when bass were far more abundant around Cornwall than they are now, far larger catches were made by inshore netters.

In case readers feel I am opposed to C&R for bass, let me make it clear I am not. As a recreational sea angler, I impose upon myself a MLS considerably above any legal limit and therefore automati-



(above) One tier of nets - only 180yards - had 50 boxes of fish in it.

(below) He had to creep in very slowly as any throttle made the nose dip.



cally practice C&R for fish less than my own MLS. I also, **very** occasionally enjoy a 'red letter' day and catch a dozen or even two dozen bass. Invariably, not only are those below my own MLS returned but also those in excess of my own requirements for personal consumption. I subscribe in principle to the notion that it is perfectly acceptable to harvest a proportion of any fish stock for consumption but I differ from a great many in that to my mind there can be no superior right of access to a public renewable fishery resource than by that very same public. Those that choose to do so that is, and I do not believe there is anything inherently wrong with retaining a proportion of what one catches for one's own family to enjoy. If, after the public have harvested their requirements there is excess for some level of commercial harvest, so be it. My message to the RSA community is not to neces-

sarily stop practising C&R, but to understand that C&R on its own is unlikely to improve sea angling for bass in the future UNLESS it is accompanied by sufficiently restrictive management imposed on commercial exploitation.

In France, RSA have successfully persuaded the Government to impose a 42 cm MLS upon itself. The recreational angler's thinking was that taking this lead would place them on the moral high ground and commercials would have to follow. To date, there are no signs that the commercials will do anything of the sort. Now, some within the RSA community are asking why they are returning 40 cm bass, a significant proportion of which are subsequently captured by commercials and knocked on the head. Returning fish to enhance the fishery and improve the quality of the angling experience over the longer time is absolutely the right way forward but with

commercial effort simply sponging up most of the bass that RSA return, some recreationalists are now questioning the sense of such a move.

Whilst discussing C&R with one or two fellow anglers, they came up with the following observations which I think are worth sharing with you.

"Data obtained by researchers under Sea Angling 2012- the government's latest batch of research into sea angling - seems to be presenting bass anglers with a thorny problem.

It seems that all the anglers researched are claiming to return all the fish they catch. This isn't perhaps so surprising when the researchers also happen to be attractive women who anglers would not wish to offend with grisly tales of their brutality towards fish.

In the case of current quota stocks, the news that anglers are returning all the fish they

catch probably doesn't matter too much given that all the quota has already been allocated to commercials, but in the case of non-quota stocks the news that sea anglers are returning all their fish seriously jeopardises the prospect of any future bass quota being awarded to sea anglers - if bass anglers don't keep bass they don't need a quota for bass. The commercials must be laughing at us, all the way to the bank. It seems anglers are letting their balls get in the way of their brains."

"Politically, premature C&R policy is a total disaster for the bass stock. It gives anglers an excuse to sit back and contemplate their wonderful behaviour rather than dealing with the facts."

"RSA needs to focus on creating the circumstances where C&R will benefit those who practice it, rather than dogmatically pursuing C&R from the perspective of 'I'm holier than thou'."

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