

# Catch or release? That's the big question!

Bass anglers aren't the anoraks of the sea fishing world, they are realists who view their sport from a much wider platform. As B.A.S.S. member **Peter Macconnell** says: "We don't dictate catch and release rules and we believe in making recommendations based on common sense, sporting attitudes, and a good knowledge of bass stocks"

**I** imagine two anglers meeting; let's call them Dave and Steve. They get into conversation and soon find out they are both keen bass fishermen.

Dave says: "Hi Steve, nice to meet you. Are you a B.A.S.S. member, then?"

Steve replies: "No. I know it does really good stuff campaigning for bass conservation and all that, but I'm not really sure I agree with how it wants us to release all the bass we catch. And anyway the netters take tons more bass than we do, so why should we have to put them all back when they can take all they want?"

"Where did you hear that B.A.S.S. is against you keeping fish, Steve?"

"I read all about it on one of the web forums."

"Well, you shouldn't believe everything you read on those forums. Let me tell you the real story. B.A.S.S. has been going since 1973 and has always believed that anglers have a right to take fish to eat. It is a right we should never give up, but we should also be conservation-minded and keep a sense of proportion about it."

"Is it true," asks Steve, "that B.A.S.S. thinks the minimum landing size for bass should be bigger?"

"That's right. We would like to see the current minimum landing size, often referred to as MLS, for bass increased to 45cm. This would ensure that they've had a chance to breed at least once before being taken by anglers or commercial fishermen, and we'd like to see this introduced across Europe to make it fair and workable."

"I can see the sense in that, but what about those pair-trawlers that I've heard about? Don't they catch tons of spawning fish each year? What good would it be to increase the landing size, just so that a few big trawlers can grab the lion's share for profit?"

"You're absolutely right Steve. That's why B.A.S.S. has been campaigning for the past 10 years to get the offshore pair-trawl fishery closed, and it's also why it has been collaborating with other bass

anglers in France, Holland and Ireland."

## **Different anglers, different backgrounds**

B.A.S.S. has all kinds of members from different backgrounds - some are coarse anglers used to returning all their fish, some are trout fishermen for whom keeping fish to eat is the tradition, and some have always been sea anglers and are therefore used to eating some of the fish they catch.

"B.A.S.S. welcomes them all," says Dave, "and doesn't make anyone conform to a set of catch and release rules."

"It's more about making recommendations based on common sense, sporting attitudes, and a pretty good knowledge about bass stocks that we've built up over many years," adds Dave.

Society members are a mixture of people who either

enjoy eating bass or whose main kick is catching, then releasing, bass and watching them swim away.

"Well, I like both," says Steve.

"Most of us do," replies Dave.

Steve reflects on what he's been told and says: "B.A.S.S. doesn't seem to be like I thought it was."

"I think a lot of people get us wrong until they join and find out what we are really like," says Dave.

"Anyway Steve, it's been nice talking to you. I must be going now; I'm cooking the wife's tea tonight."

"Oh, what are you having?"

"A nice 3lb bass I caught last night. I eat a few bass I catch each season."

They exchange phone numbers and agree to join up for a day's fishing.

On parting, Steve says: "What's the website address for B.A.S.S.? I think I'd like to find out more".

"Good idea," says Dave. "You'll find it at [www.ukbass.com](http://www.ukbass.com)" **SA**

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