

Not another survey, surely?

BASS chairman Ian Misselbrook tells it straight about Sea Angling 2012. If you want more and bigger bass available to catch in years to come, let's have your attention...

Knowledge and information are the keys to successful sea fishing.

While BASS, as a society, constantly endeavours to encourage government to improve the legislation, management and protection of our fish stocks, it could appear to many that this political element is all that we are about.

Yes, we do bang on constantly about an increase to the existing minimum size limits.

Yes, we are concerned about illegal netting and the taking of undersized fish in nursery areas.

Yes, we are concerned that commercial fishermen always get the rub of the green and are viewed by politicians as economically more important.

However much we point to the economic value of recreational sea anglers, already recognised in Ireland and the States with corresponding protection and management, it's as if we are saddled with the age-old attitude: "It might be okay in those countries but you must appreciate it's different here."

This colonial attitude that "we know best" and "we taught the rest of the world and have nothing to learn from others" is outdated and patronising.

The key to making change happen is to show our elected body in Whitehall the financial value of RSA. For this to happen they need the information.

We have this opportunity with

the advent of Sea Angling 2012.

"Not another survey," I hear you say, but BASS and the Angling Trust have members on the steering group, we feel the right questions have been put into it, and if answered honestly they should benefit us all.

I encourage you all to take part in the survey, and in doing so show government the true value of RSA. Correct and honest information is essential, and this is something BASS prides itself on.

BASS has had, for many years, a rolling research project looking at the relationships between bass length, weight and age. It is linked to the new BASS logbook scheme, and supports our campaigns and discussions via the Restoration Team. This project relies on members sending scale samples and certain fish details to the catch recorders. These samples and details are then independently analysed and compared with the previous year.

The accompanying chart shows the number of bass in each age class (year of birth) sampled by members in 2011. As in previous years, most of the scale samples were from fish of four to 13 years old, with 12 fish of 17 years old (1994 year class) or older. Although bass can live up to 30 years, any over 20 years are nowadays quite rare.

From our records it appears that 2011 had been a good year for growth, following another cold winter. With the long mild autumn, many bass were probably still growing in November. Our data provided further evidence that 2002-2004 were quite good



Bass anglers have important information about fish stocks and should share it

year classes, but after a few cold winters we do not expect recent years to be as good. The 2011 analysis suggests that although there appears to have been an improvement in both numbers and size of fish caught from the shore, and that there are still a few big, old bass about, these are too few and far between.

You will see that this annual information is crucial in demonstrating the true state of stocks and the need for protection

and management.

The more members we have providing this information, the clearer the picture is. If we don't become involved, at all levels, it will only reinforce the apathetic stigma that exists within RSA - and we'll get nowhere.

So when you see or receive a flyer asking: "Are you interested in the state of our fish stocks and how sea angling is represented in marine policy?" give the information - it will benefit us all. **SA**

