



# BASS

## Restoration Project Newsletter



The Bass Angler's Sportfishing Society

Issue Number



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Courtesy Aldeburgh Angler July 2000. Bass 8 + 7lbs. Skipper Stewart Smalley

## On the Campaign Trail

Steve Pitts - Restoration Project Chairman

So much has happened over the past twelve months that we have decided to produce a bumper newsletter to encompass most, but not every development, on the restoration front.

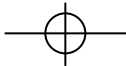
They say that success breeds success and we are certainly finding this to be true of our campaigning work. Success however doesn't just happen without a lot of hard work and it certainly doesn't happen overnight.

I'd like to thank the restoration team for the thousands, (yes, thousands), of hours of work that they have put in to gaining some significant achievements. Some of which you will read about in this issue.

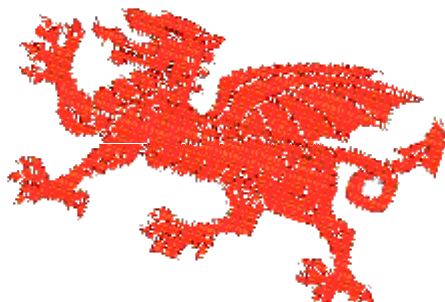
It is also gratifying to know that, as well as the financial support that many BASS members provide, guys like Frank Beaugendre, Geoff Hancock, John Morgan and Wayne James give much needed help in terms of time and ideas.

Thanks also to Richard McLaughlin for his help in the production of this newsletter and to Peter Macconnell for setting the standard with his editorship of previous issues.

I hope that you enjoy catching up on recent developments in our activities and that this newsletter, and future editions will compliment the content of the BASS magazine.



# The Dragon Awakes



## The Welsh Assembly wakes up to the importance of recreational fishing.

Geoff Hancock reports.

On 10th July 2001 BASS were invited by Rowland Sharp, of the Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers, to attend and participate in a meeting with Mr Glyn Perryman, Fisheries Policy Manager for Wales, to discuss the concerns and proposals of recreational sea anglers in Wales.

Also present was our good friend Mr Hefin Jones, President of the W.F.S.A.

Mr Perryman explained that this meeting was to provide an opportunity for consultation towards the establishment of policy for a sustainable marine fishery.

Mr Perryman revealed that...

### the Welsh Assembly had "woken-up" to the importance of recreational fishing...

(especially post Nautilus report) and was considering using its legislative powers to resolve the concerns of Welsh Anglers. The European Bass was used as an example of apparent problems relating to stock quality and we suggested to Mr Perryman that the main problems were:

- Lack of better quality fish at 2kg and above.
- The very high level of "illegal" inshore bass netting.
- The current legality of netting for own personal consumption.
- The cost of current enforcement methods.
- The perceived effect of offshore pair trawling.

We suggested an increased minimum landing size to allow a minimum of 2 spawnings before a bass could be taken. Subject to scientific clarification a 44cm size was discussed.



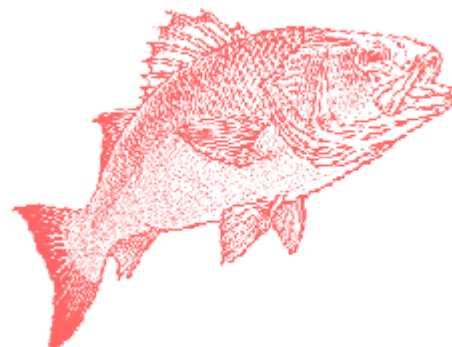
M Turner, Cumbria 2000 with a 7lb tagged bass.

### Illegally taken bass estimated at 50% to 75% of the legal take.

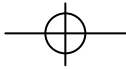
Also a bag limit of (say) 2 bass per day per person to enable the proper control of "illegal" netting. This to be enforced throughout Wales (and argued for on a UK basis). Better enforcement would reduce bass mortality and offset the "pain" suffered by the licensed commercial operators who would face an increased minimum landing size.

Mr Perryman was keen to establish whether or not angling related expenditure might increase by encouraging stock restoration. I believe he saw potential in the Irish developments!

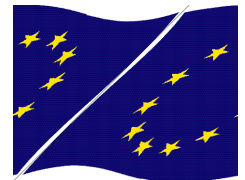
Similar meetings are to take place with other stakeholders including, the Tourism Industry, Monitoring and Control agencies, Environmental bodies and the Commercial fishing industry.







# B.A.S.S. goes to Brussels.



As part of the review of the Common Fisheries Policy, a three day public hearing was held at the EU commission in Brussels in early June. For the first time, at this level of debate, recreational sport angling was represented and BASS restoration team members Bob Cox and Malcolm Gilbert attended to put our case forward.

## Malcolm reports:

There were over 400 participants, with translation into eleven languages. Interests represented included, commercial fishing, fish processing & marketing, environmental groups, economists, ship building, research institutions, universities, national government administrators, members of the European parliament, press AND Sportfishing.

In order to get the floor one had to apply in advance in writing. If time allowed the Chairman would call you to the floor. A large commercial fishing delegation centered debate on protecting livelihoods. Comments made for the fishing industry included:

- The CFP should prioritise jobs and be wary of conservation becoming the priority.
- The CFP has failed to address short term losses. Top priority should be compensation for fishermen.



Kenny Bowes with a 9lb Bass in the 2000 season.

- A French speaker said that the reduction in fish stocks was due to pollution and climatic changes, not over fishing.
- The Dutch fishermen's spokesman, was extremely critical of input to the discussion from the Greens.
- The Spanish Fishing Federation does not accept that the European fishing fleet is too large.

- Greek fishermen focused on the need for subsidies in order to retain ways of life.
- Andres LeBerre of Brittany said there was too much talk about the environment and not enough about fishermen.
- A Portuguese delegate wanted modernisation of fishing boats, attributing over-fishing to sport fishing and pollution.

These are only a small selection of the comments made but they do give an indication of the amount of posturing by commercial fishing organisations who are undoubtedly feeling increasingly threatened by environmentalists and now sport fishers!

Bob Cox was called to speak on the first day and the following is a summary of his presentation on behalf of BASS;

*The first sentence of this section of the CFP green paper was written with the organisation whom I represent in mind, it recommends as a future priority... "The establishment of regional advisory committees to involve more efficiently the stakeholders in policy making".*

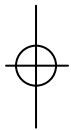
*Historically anglers have been the major stakeholders in the NW European bass fishery, along with the artisanal bass fishermen of France and the UK. For 100 years the fishery remained in balance.*

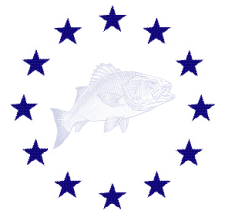
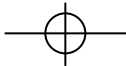
*In the mid 1970's gill nets arrived in the UK and bass became a target. Then in the early 1990's pelagic trawlers began to fish the large concentrations of spawning bass in the western approaches of the channel.*

***"Within a decade, the once healthy and sustainable fishery was gone."***

*Landing sizes below that required for sexual maturity, guarantees smaller fish of less interest to the sport. The UK has 361,000 bass anglers, all are stakeholders, and the fish belong to us all. We are deeply aggrieved that the CFP allows commercial fishing to decimate our sport.*

*The Green Paper proposes more involvement of stakeholders in decision making. Sport fishing should be recognized as a stakeholder. Bass anglers from Holland, France, Ireland and the UK are uniting and demand that they be heard, Their numbers are growing as is their insistence that they be included in the management of the NW European bass fishery.*





## B.A.S.S goes to Brussels cont...

*Bass must not be allowed to join the lengthening list of fish that are "outside safe biological limits". The commercial sector may fish its self out of business, but it must not be allowed to take the sport fishing industry with it.*

A John Goodlad of the Shetland Fishermen's Association followed with the opinion that the livelihoods of fishermen should take priority since the CFP was primarily about livelihoods. There were many heads from commercial fishing interests vigorously nodding approval of such statement.



When I was summoned to the floor. I responded as follows.

Mr Chairman,  
I have prepared some notes in anticipation of being given the floor but I first wish to briefly respond to comments made earlier today by John Goodlad of the Shetland Fishermen's Association,  
Re: recreational fishing for sea bass.

*I agree with Mr Goodlad, the livelihoods of those depending on the fish stocks are extremely important. However, Mr Goodlad needs to become better informed before he speaks on a subject that he evidently knows little about. The notion that recreational sport fishing involves a rod and line, with a fool at one end and a worm on the other, is only part of the story.*

*In the UK, MAFF commissioned a study on the bass fishery in the early 1990's which concluded that the recreational bass fishery resulted in almost £20 million worth of expenditure, supporting many more livelihoods than the commercial fishery which generated a firsthand sale value of less than £4 million. The study further showed that almost three quarters of recreationally captured bass were returned alive. Mr Chairman, the Common Fisheries Policy recognises quite correctly the socio-economic*

*dimension of commercial fishing, processing and marketing. Moreover, it does the same for aquaculture. Yet it has totally overlooked salt water sport fishing, which is a major recreational activity with over seven million participants throughout Europe. The expenditure by those who participate, supports significant and diverse industries. Allow me to provide some indicators to demonstrate the economic significance. The government states that...*

**UK recreational angling creates  
£5 billion in annual expenditure.**

**The total first-hand sale value of all  
commercial landings is less than  
£¾ billion.**

*In Holland angling expenditure is £250 million. The European Fishing Tackle Trade Association conservatively calculates the value of just the manufacturing tackle industry at £6 billion sterling, supporting 60,000 direct livelihoods.*

*Through sport fishing, millions of young people learn to understand and develop an appreciation of nature and the environment.*

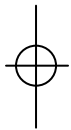
*Thousands of coastal sea angling clubs provide a focus for socialising. We request that the Commission explore some of the examples in other parts of the globe to gain an understanding of what can be achieved with an appropriate management approach. Such studies would perhaps be facilitated by a joint approach between DG Fisheries together with the DG's for Tourism, Environment and Sport.*

**The Common Fisheries Policy  
Green Paper calls for some fresh  
innovative ideas...**

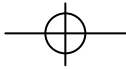
*and we believe this is one way of optimising the socio-economic benefits with minimal fishing mortality and minimal adverse environmental impact.*

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

For some reason the same heads that had nodded at John Goodlad's comments remained absolutely frozen during this response.







# Bass Tagging Captures the Imagination



## Tagging appeals to the naturalist in us all...

it opens a window of opportunity for us to discover where 'our' fish go when they are 'not here'. It is also an invaluable tool for scientists to unravel the mysteries of fish migration, and to understand the dynamics of their populations. Tagging has a well-documented history in the study of



Aldeburgh Angler 10lbs - Returned in July 2000.

bass migrations. Early work by Donovan Kelley in the 1970s, and later studies by the Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) and its predecessors established our current knowledge of seasonal migration patterns around north-west Europe.

## The Background

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was...

## a massive increase in the commercial exploitation of bass by pair trawling...

in the Western Approaches of the Channel. This fishery was originally discovered by French commercial fishermen, but shortly after boats from England and Scotland joined in. By the mid 1990s, British anglers questioned the impact of this fishery, as larger bass catches declined.

The CEFAS, Offshore Bass Fishery, Pilot Study Report: M0802, documented catches in this fishery between January and March 1999 revealing scientific evidence supporting our worst fears about its impact. The Bass Anglers' Sportfishing Society (BASS), supported by the National Federation of Sea Anglers and the European Anglers' Alliance, mounted a letter writing campaign targeting both MPs and MEPs. The result of this campaign was to focus the attention of both MAFF and the European Union DGIV (Fisheries)

on our concerns, and to gain approval for a joint scientific study of this fishery to be conducted by CEFAS in the UK and the French Institute for Research on the Exploitation of Maritime Resources (IFREMER) in France.

## The Objectives

When CEFAS proposed this study, they used the following objectives:

- To learn which summer fisheries are supported by fish which spawn in the Western Approaches.
- To determine the relative contribution of each of these populations to the winter offshore fishery.
- To update our knowledge of the patterns of autumn migrations from summer feeding areas to the winter spawning grounds.
- To find out if temperature changes since the 1980s have affected the distribution migrations of bass.
- To encourage other national bodies (France, Ireland and the Channel Islands) to join in the study.

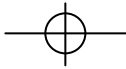


Robin Bradley of Cornwall with a fine shore caught bass.

## The Study

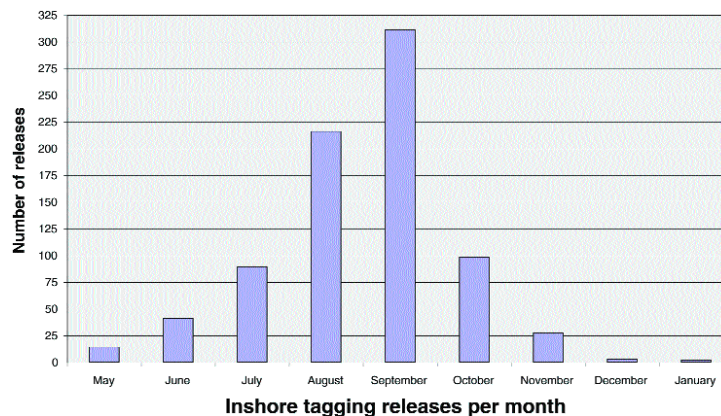
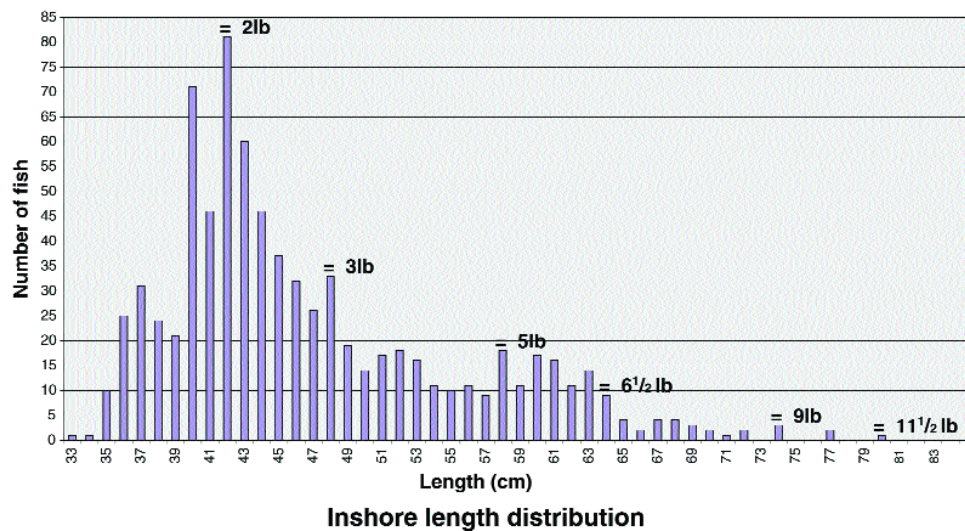
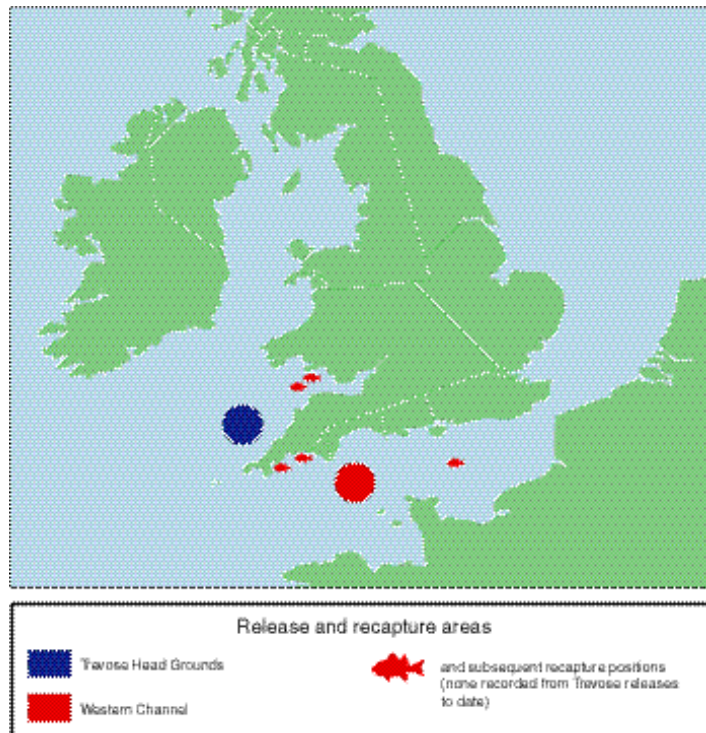
In order to achieve these objectives, it was necessary to arrange for large numbers of fish to be tagged both in the offshore grounds in winter and in the inshore fisheries in summer.

Staff from CEFAS tagged a total of 582 fish from Scottish vessels in the Western Approaches during March 2000. These varied in weight from 1kg to over 6kg. Staff from IFREMER Brest accompanied French pair-trawling vessels and tagged 65 fish from the Trevoze Head grounds, north of Cornwall, and 122 in the Western Approaches.

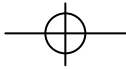


# BASS TAGGING

Offshore bass tagging areas and recapture positions



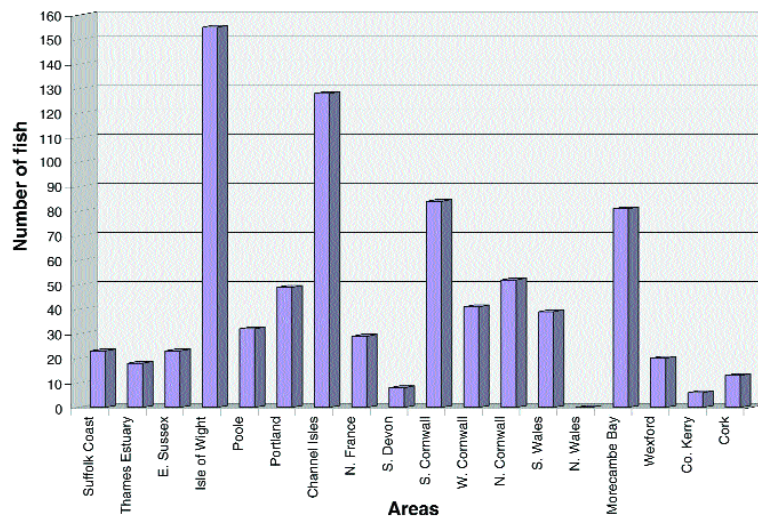
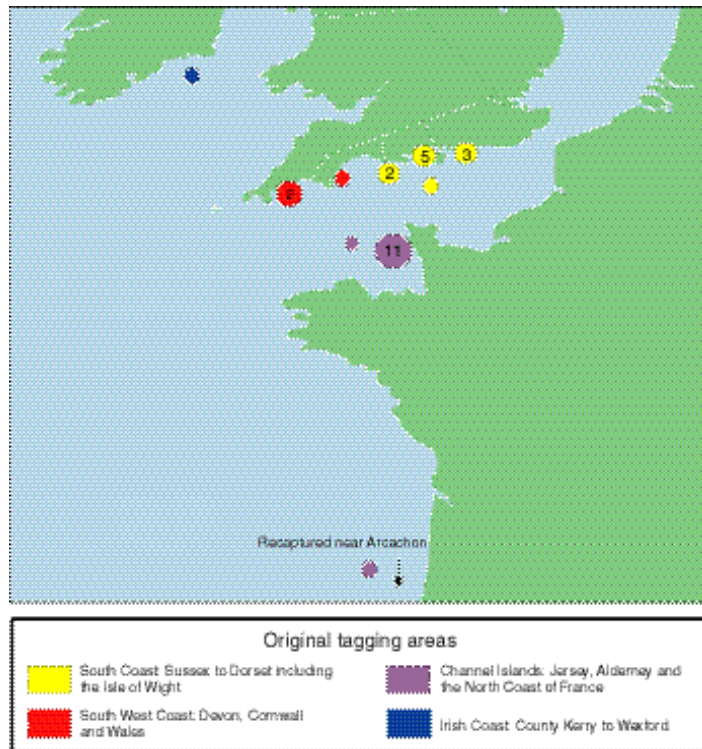




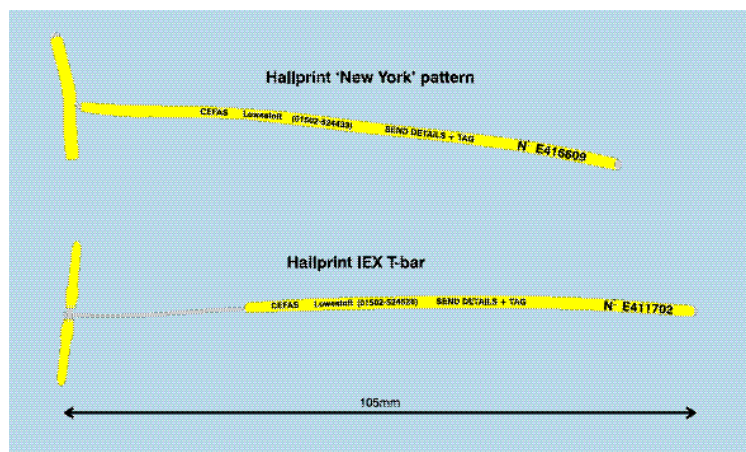
# & RECAPTURES



Inshore bass reported recapture positions



Numbers of bass tagged in each area





## Bass Tagging cont...

Mike Pawson and Graham Pickett of CEFAS asked BASS to help tag fish over 1.5kg from the inshore summer fishery. We agreed to help if the information was shared openly and honestly, and the findings were used to further bass conservation.

John LeBalleur volunteered to act as the BASS Tagging Co-ordinator and Lisa MacLeod (CEFAS) managed the data including the Bass Tagging 24hr Hotline (tel. 01502 524 526).



Mike Turner with a 10lbs 10oz bass in 1999.

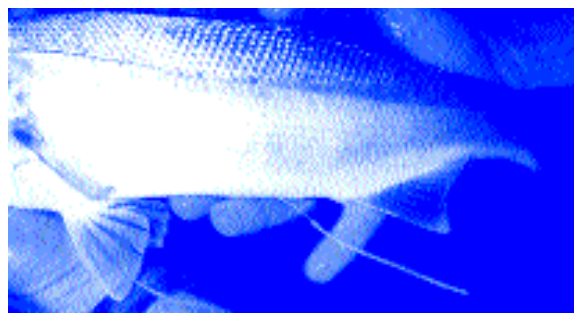
### BASS members were trained in tagging and formed their own teams

15 sites were established around the UK, Channel Islands, Ireland and France. 581 fish were tagged by our members during 2000. Commercial fishermen and charter-boats also participated, managed by CEFAS, tagging a 216 fish in 2000.

Details were compiled monthly, and exchanged between BASS and CEFAS. This information was placed on the CEFAS website ([www.cefass.co.uk/basstaging.htm](http://www.cefass.co.uk/basstaging.htm)) and the BASS website ([www.ukbass.com/tag\\_page.html](http://www.ukbass.com/tag_page.html)). The CEFAS website has now also been translated into French.

#### The Tags

At the start of the study, Australian-made Hall T-bar tags were used. These are 10cm long, yellow nylon tubes with a nylon T-bar at one end. They are attached to the lower flank of the fish by removing a number of scales and making a small incision with a scalpel. The T-Bar is then inserted through the body-wall of the fish. This is a difficult task when taking into account a lively fish, cold and wet hands, a rolling



Average size of tagged bass

vessel at sea, or darkness. During the study, these were superseded by a new Hall tag developed for the American striped bass fishery.

This tag was completely covered in a yellow nylon sleeve. This uses a pivoting T-bar which is easier to insert and needs a smaller incision. Both tags have individual serial numbers, with return details for IFREMER and CEFAS in French and English.

#### The Results to date

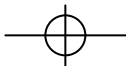
With 1,566 fish tagged during 2000, we have to date received details of 5 recaptures from the offshore tagging, and 22 from the inshore tagging. While these returns may seem small (1.7%), the average released time is still only about 6 months, so it represents an annual exploitation rate of about 3.5%. For a long-lived species like bass, the natural mortality rate of mature fish is likely to be between 5 and 10%, so this level of fishing mortality is not insignificant by comparison.

Some interesting details about recaptured fish include:

Two fish recaptured off south Wales in June–July had been tagged close to Start Point, south Devon. One was recaptured by a commercial rod & line fisherman, and the second by a beamer out of Milford Haven in deep water. While local people may have felt that their fish were from a local Celtic Sea stock, this shows that they are actually part of the larger population.

The winter-tagged fish recaptured between the Isle of Wight and the Cherbourg Peninsula was caught by a French trawler in deep water, landed in France and the information returned to CEFAS via IFREMER within 7–10 days.





Malcolm Brindle with an 8lb Dorset Bass

Most of the summer-tagged fish have been re-captured close to their tagging sites. Alan Vaughan saw his first fish tagged in south Devon recaptured some 8km further down the coast, two months later, by a pleasure angler.

Mike Ladle was informed that a fish that he had tagged in Dorset had travelled some 22km down the coast to be caught by a commercial rod & line fisherman.



Andrew Syvret (pictured above) was amazed when a fish that he had tagged in Jersey in September was

caught by French sole netter close to the beach at Arcachon in the south of the Bay of Biscay, almost exactly two months later to the day. This fish must have travelled over 1,200km.

John Hall from Cork had one of his fish caught by a French trawler and landed in the French port of Brest.

### The Future

The programme will continue in 2001 with more summer tagging locations including N. Wales, and we are seeking support from anglers in France, Holland and Spain.

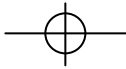
CEFAS intend to use data storage tags to increase the information from individual fish. They hope to visit 5 sites at the limits of the tagging area, east of Sussex and north of Pembroke, putting 20 data storage tags on (3–5 kg) bass. The autumn gales severely restricted bass fishing at the end of the 2000 season, helping safeguard the fish as they traveled to their winter grounds to spawn. IFREMER will continue tagging in the offshore fishery this winter, but were unable to contribute to the summer tagging.

**We started this programme to prove beyond doubt that the fish leaving our inshore sites are the same stock being decimated in the winter fishery.**

Tag returns in winter 2000/01 should prove or disprove this. As a result of our efforts, the EU commissioned a study of bass stocks by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES). We hope Holland and Spain will participate in this and that fellow bass anglers there and in France will support these tagging studies to improve our knowledge of bass migration routes and to aid stock conservation for the future.

Never before have so many bass been tagged and released from so many locations in a concerted effort by such an experienced and dedicated team. I would like to say 'well done' to each and every one of the participants. We are immensely proud of the open and honest working relationship we have been able to establish with CEFAS.

John LeBalleur – BASS Tagging Co-ordinator.



## B.A.S.S. at the N.E.C



Come into my parlour! John Morgan and Mike Oliver lure two punters into the BASS stand...neither has been seen since.

### The Go fishing 2001 exhibition at the N.E.C drew its largest attendance figures so far.

Held over the 23rd, 24th and 25th of March, the Birmingham venue was a Mecca for anglers from coarse, game and sea disciplines. B.A.S.S. were kindly offered a stand, to promote the society and its restoration work, free from charge and we accepted the chance to get out and meet the sea-angling public readily.

Thanks to John Leballeur and new membership secretary David Riley, the B.A.S.S. stand was resplendently decorated with eye-catching posters detailing the history, past achievements and current aims of the society. CEFAS had prepared two huge printed versions of their web-page giving info on the joint tagging program.

David Riley and his son Peter had prepared laminated posters which reflected extracts from the B.A.S.S. web site. These covered the restoration project, the threat from the off-shore fishery, our stakeholder alliance with the recreational fishing trade and correspondence both to and from MPs, MEPs and other government bodies at home and in Europe. All in all, a very professional presentation, easily the equal of the more established displays.

During the three day event the stand was manned by several of the B.A.S.S. committee who were able to answer general questions on Bass fishing from the

public, to promote our vision of more and bigger Bass and to sign up new members.

### We were particularly popular with Salmon and Trout anglers wishing to get into fly-fishing for Bass.

Visitors from over-seas included French, Dutch and even a couple from South Africa were keen to hear our views on catch and release and other sportfishing practices.

It was extremely encouraging to get so many enquiries from youngsters. Our hope is that by the time these budding Bass-catchers are in their teens and twenties, the fish that they are catching now will have grown up with them and will be the six, seven and eight pounders that we all used to catch when we were younger.

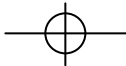
As a first attempt to get our views across to a wider audience, the Go Fishing exhibition at the NEC was a resounding success.

The BASS stand was also present at the Recreational Sea Angling conference, held at Cardiff University in May and the Lure Anglers' Society conference held in Derby in June.

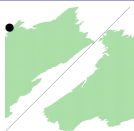
Our thanks go to all those who participated and helped plan for these events.







# B.A.S.S. en France



## Meeting with the European Bass Collective in Roscoff



### Report by Frank Beaugendre

Bob Cox, John Leballeur and Frank Beaugendre were invited to attend a meeting with the CBE or European Bass Collective near Roscoff in Brittany on the 29th April. The purpose of the meeting was to build on contacts with French anglers established on previous visits to Brittany by BASS members, to show support for the CBE and also to provide them with information on the political and scientific advances in the campaign and the tagging programme. The CBE's aims for bass are similar to those of BASS and in many ways the CBE echoes our views on the other side of the channel.

After introductions Bob Cox explained the history of the restoration project and the various stages already taken in the campaign for more and bigger bass. Bob also explained the decision to work through established organizations as being the most effective means of achieving political change from the perspective of the position in the UK, which culminated at the European Anglers Alliance and DGXVI. This is a subject of particular interest to the CBE as a newly formed society. Bob then drew the attention of the audience to the vital importance of replying to the green paper on the reform of the Common Fisheries policy. It was agreed that respective societies should exchange responses to the Commission on the contents of the Green Paper.

Inevitably pauses in the presentation were necessary to allow for translation but interruptions in the flow of the presentation were minimal due to the excellent translation skills of Stephan Beaucher the CBE's translator and representative for external affairs.

John Leballeur was then invited to make a presentation on the tagging programme conducted to date in the UK, Ireland and the Channel Islands. John made clear that if the Collectif should wish to become involved in the programme they should seek to do so under the guidance of IFREMER, the French counterpart of CEFAS.

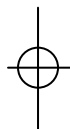
John covered all the management details and the various items used for tagging. The Collectif intend to record length/weight and take scale samples this season and are to be provided with 1000 scale packets for this purpose. It was also agreed that John would check 50 of their samples to confirm age assessments.

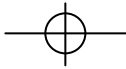
**We were all struck by the competence and enthusiasm for restoration shown by the members of the Collectif.**

We were made to feel most welcome by all concerned. We would like to extend our particular thanks to Jean Louis Guillou who was our guide and chaperone.

### Foot note.

As a result of this meeting the CBE have offered BASS, membership of their collectif and as a reciprocal gesture, and in the spirit of unity, BASS have given the CBE honorary affiliation to the Bass Angler's Sportfishing society.





## Support for our vision grows.

EU Commissioner, Franz Fischler, has promised to refer the findings of the study on the state of bass stocks, currently being conducted by CEMERE, to the influential Scientific, Technical & Economic Committee for Fisheries.

He has accepted our recommendation that consideration of the socio-economic value of bass should be considered AND that he will personally draw their attention to the undoubted economic value of the bass sportfishery.

**English Nature have stated:**

"In the UK, and we suspect several other EU Member States, the servicing of sea angling can add

significantly to the economy of coastal communities, often in areas that may not have many other sources of income. Sea anglers are also affected by declining stocks. We recommend that recreational fishing is recognised and considered within the review."

**Kate Hoey MP, minister for sport at the time of the consultation**, wrote the following directly to fisheries minister Elliot Morley;

Dear Elliot,

I was disappointed that my department was not formally consulted on the European Commission's Green Paper(CFP). As you know, my department has responsibility for sea angling and the recommendations of the Green Paper touch on the fundamental aspects of the sport, particularly the availability of fish stocks to sea anglers.

### I also share the sea anglers concerns...

that the consultation paper on the CFP is advocating an increased industry involvement in decisions on fisheries management. I would support a greater representation by sea anglers and industry bodies in these management issues and it is crucial that the UK priorities must reflect the important role that sea angling has to play in the development of our Common Fisheries Policy.

Best Wishes,  
Kate.

**Unfortunately this response was not received in time for the 31st May deadline and has therefore not been officially included in the consultation record.**



Project Supporter, Roger Bayzand  
Skipper of Sundance II of Lymington



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B.A.S.S has obtained copies of all the correspondence received by MAFF in connection with the recent Common Fisheries Policy consultation. A big thank you to all 50 members who wrote in. Of the 118 responses received at MAFF, nearly 75% called for greater emphasis on fish stock restoration and many suggested that Bass be recognised and managed as a recreational sport species. We will keep the pressure on MAFF (now DEFRA) to include your proposals within the forthcoming reform of the C.F.P.

EU fisheries commissioner, Franz Fischler, promised a study by I.C.E.S into the state of the EU Bass stocks. BASS suggested that the findings be submitted to an independent body capable of interpreting the recreational value of Bass. MEP Neil Parish, said the commissioner took this on board due to, in his words, "the undoubted value of the Bass sport fishery". We have now received a letter from the director general of fisheries advising us that there has been a 'misunderstanding' and that the I.C.E.S study will no longer be reviewed as promised.

This about-turn is very worrying and is, we fear, a possible reaction to those wanting the offshore Bass fishery maintained. If you have any ink left in your pens, please write to Commissioner Fischler at the following address, demanding that he honours his promise to refer the I.C.E.S study to the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee. Just a few lines will do and it will only cost 25p for a stamp. It has taken us three years to get this far so don't let the bureaucrats get away with it. Please write to;  
Commissioner F. FISCHLER. RUE DE LA LOI 200. WETSTRATT 200 B-1049 BRUSSELS. Thanks.