

# Pollack

## PROJECT UPDATE



## WHAT IS POLLACK FISP?

The Pollack Fisheries Industry Science Partnership (FISP) project is a collaboration between charter skippers, recreational anglers and researchers to discover more about pollack in Dorset, Devon and Cornwall.

The project is collecting data about pollack populations, movement and habitats, as well as about fisheries interactions in the western English Channel. This will provide evidence to help support future fisheries assessments and create sustainable fisheries.

We will also collect opinions from recreational anglers, charter skippers and commercial pollack fishermen on the state and future of the fishery. This will be done through interviews and a workshop hosted at the University of Plymouth Marine Station on Wednesday 14th February 2024. Find out more on [our website](#),

**Pollack FISP have not contributed to the recent ICES advice in subareas 6-7 for zero pollack catch in 2024**. Likewise, the project's data was not used to inform the management measures following the annual UK-EU bilateral fisheries discussions.



## DID YOU KNOW?

- Pollack is economically and socially important for communities along the Devon and Cornwall coast.
- Over the last 20 years, pollack has experienced a 72% decline in commercial landings.
- Between 2008 and 2019, nearly 24.5 million tonnes of pollack were officially landed by commercial fishermen into UK ports.



# TRACKING FISH

In 2023, we fitted 50 pollack with tags to track their movements. Each tag continuously emits a uniquely coded 'ping' which can be detected by receivers on the seabed. The University of Plymouth team manages a network of receivers along the south coast and obtains data from receivers around Europe.

This tracking data will reveal when and where pollack migrate, and identify the habitats they rely on, particularly at important life stages such as spawning. It will also provide mortality estimates by identifying uncharacteristic absences of tagged fish.

The tagging work is being led by Dr Thomas Stamp, who is pleased with the support he's received from the fishing community to overcome early challenges:



“ One of the big hurdles was that pollack are really susceptible to barotrauma. So we had to work out how to catch, tag and then release the fish alive. One of the charter skippers we work with suggested we use a seaqualizer to get the fish back to the depth they were caught. We've now used this method on a lot of fish and (thankfully) are now starting to get loads of really interesting data back on the daily lives of the fish we tagged. ”

**Dr Thomas Stamp, University of Plymouth**

## IF YOU SEE A TAGGED POLLACK...

Some of the fish we've tagged have been fitted with a yellow "floy" tag at the base of the dorsal fin. On this tag you will see an email address ([fishtracking@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:fishtracking@plymouth.ac.uk)) and a tag ID number. If you catch a tagged fish, please email us with as much information as possible about when and where the fish was caught. If you're fishing on secret marks, even just knowing this fish has been recaptured is extremely valuable.







## POLLACK MEASUREMENTS

A consortium of 14 charter vessels are collecting data from pollack caught from a variety of locations, from inshore reefs to offshore wrecks. Together, they cover the area from Weymouth to Penzance, and are recording Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) and fish measurement data.

Around 200 fish will be retained to provide biological data for stock assessment. Stomach contents will be analysed to identify prey species, otoliths (ear bones) will be used to age the fish, and gonads will be used to sex fish and calculate spawning activity. By measuring and ageing the fish, we learn about their size at different ages and at maturity.

As of December 2023, the 14 charter-boat skippers have measured 9,029 fish from 507 trips to sea. The average CPUE across the fleet was 36.33 kg/trip in 2023, with considerable variation between the regions. We are extremely grateful to the anglers who are contributing to the project.

“ The PBA charter skippers and their anglers are a vital component of this project – they are true partners. The PBA skippers we work with are the ‘experts by experience’ on these fish, having spent much of their lives on the water. Not only do we rely on their skills to find fish and to record sizes, it’s also essential incorporate their expertise to assess pollack stocks.

I’ll also be collecting data from logbooks and trophy catch records to look for historic trends. If you have access to this information that you’d be happy to share, please email me at [simon.f.thomas@york.ac.uk](mailto:simon.f.thomas@york.ac.uk). ”

**Dr Simon Thomas leads the collection and analysis of biometric data.**



“ Many of us who have spent years fishing for pollack have seen a change in the number and size of fish we have caught over the years. Healthy pollack stocks are vital for the livelihoods of both the commercial and recreational sectors, so we are committed to doing what we can to learn more about this fascinating species.

I find it really rewarding to support anglers in sharing their knowledge and having their say. The skippers we work with provide reliable and high-quality data, which hopefully will allow us to produce the evidence that’s needed to support sustainable fishing in the future.

None of our data has been used in any stock assessments or recommendations so far, because it’s still early days for the work. We will have valuable data to share as the project progresses though, and I look forward to being part of this. ”

**Dave Uren is the project’s Fisheries Liaison Officer, representing the Professional Boatman’s Association. His role is to help connect the fishing community and the scientists.**



The project is led by the University of Plymouth, in partnership with the Angling Trust, the Professional Boatman's Association, the Marine Biological Association and the University of York. The project team includes Dr Emma Sheehan and Dr Thomas Stamp from the University of Plymouth, Hannah Rudd from the Angling Trust, Dave Uren from Mirage Charters, Dr Simon Thomas from the University of York, and Dr Bryce Stewart from the Marine Biological Association.

The project is funded by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) via the Fisheries Industry Science Partnership (FISP) scheme, part of the UK Seafood Fund. The FISP scheme is designed to be a true partnership between industry representatives and research institutions. FISP projects will improve and share knowledge of fisheries through data collection and research to support sustainable fisheries management. The final results are due to be reported in 2025.

## FIND OUT MORE

More information about the Pollack FISP is available on the [University of Plymouth](#) and [Angling Trust](#) websites. More information about the receiver network can be found on the [FISH INTEL](#) webpage. You can watch Dr Simon Thomas and Dr Thomas Stamp present their early results in the Angling Trust's [Virtual Forum](#).



Largest pollack caught during project:  
107 cm, 10 kg

Average length of fish:  
55 cm

Otoliths collected from 104 fish.

50 pollack fitted with acoustic tags.

““ Recreational anglers and charter skippers possess a wealth of knowledge gathered over, often, many decades at sea. But that experience is often overlooked and undervalued. Through Defra's Fisheries Industry Science Partnerships, the Angling Trust are proud to be working with the Pollack FISP team to highlight the role the recreational sector can play in fisheries science and the importance of collaboration.

With pollack being a recreationally important species that supports many livelihoods in the charter sector, deepening our collective understanding of this species is crucial to ensure the science that informs management is continually improved. ””

**Hannah Rudd, Angling Trust**

