



Loch Sunart and Loch Etive
11th, 12th & 13th November 2011

Post Event Newsletter





Spurdog Tagathon

2011

First of all a big thank you to :

- **The anglers who once more demonstrated their incredible commitment.**
- The Salen Hotel (Sunart Event HQ) where Jonathan, Julia and staff welcomed the anglers – www.salenhotel.co.uk.
- Mark & Jan for offering free launching and overnight berthing on the new pontoon at a reduced rate - www.salenjetty.co.uk
- The Lochnell Arms nr Connell, for letting us run our Etive registration from their hotel www.lochnellarms.co.uk.
- Clive Fox, of the Ecology Group at SAMS and the crew of MV Calanus for organising the student's boat trip on Sunday.
- Phill Williams along to write an article on the Tagging events and carry out radio interviews with the event organisers and a local charter skipper www.fishingfilmsandfacts.co.uk.

Without the support from these and many others there could be no Tagathon.

What's next for Ellie ?

At the 2010 Tagathon Ellie caught a personal best spurdog, this year it was a personal best thornback – what next -

Sharkatag and tope ?



Event Diary

Friday :

The very strong south easterly winds made it an uncomfortable day afloat for all, but one of the benefits of fishing in Loch Sunart is you can generally find somewhere to fish in reasonable comfort in the sheltered waters, unfortunately only 4 spurdog were caught.

Round in Etive, a lot of small rays and spurdog were taken though Andy Hibbert's party fishing in the Bonawe quarry area where Ellie managed to land a nice thornback of 10.5lb.

Saturday :

The winds eased off a little during the night making the fishing on Saturday more pleasant.

Boats fishing Etive spread out and once again a lot of small spurs and rays were caught; those fishing from the shore managed to find the fish with 11 spurdog, a couple of rays and some codling; during the evening Julie Hope landed and tagged her first thornback.

Summary – Key Figures

- ★ 62 Anglers
- ★ 19 Boats
- ★ 20 Shore Fishing
- ★ 32 Fish Tagged

figures correct at time of going to press

In Sunart things looked good for the day as Gordon Goldie boated two spurdog in his first two drops, shortly followed with fish by Graham Paisley and then Willie Kennedy managed three spurdog between 9lb & 12lb in three successive drops – unfortunately, it was a false dawn and the fishing rapidly tailed off.

Sunday :

The day offered mixed weather conditions, calm conditions prevailed in Sunart, but in Etive it was quite windy.

In Sunart, the fishing was mixed, some boats struggled to find the spurdog, others were far more successful - the lads on True Blue managed to pull six fish to 12lb which was by far the best for the day.

Although boat & shore anglers did venture out in Etive catches were poor and no fish were tagged.

Upcoming Event dates :

- ★ 2012 Skate Tagathon – 13-15 April
- ★ 2012 Sharkatag – 15-17 June
- ★ 2012 Spurdog Tagathon – 2-4 November



An Anglers View of the Tagathon

Andy Hibbert

As Thursday loomed, we were all full of anticipation with what the coming weekend would hold for us all - would it be a wash out - would we see any fish! Well, after much discussion and debate in our truck on the drive up, we needn't have concerned ourselves - it wasn't..... and we did!

Although the water was getting a right old whipping from the freshening winds, there was nothing that was going to get in the way of our quest to spend the weekend afloat chasing our target species

On the Friday, we initially headed round by Airds point, which didn't produce at all. We later headed up to the area around Seal Island. This fished well throughout the early afternoon, with Ellie taking a 10 1/2 lb thornie on half a mackerel.



We had plenty fish coming aboard, spurs, thornies, mainly undersize for

tagging, with plenty of other species too, codling, gurnard, whiting, mackerel, LSDs, even langoustines.

On Saturday, we were joined by our good friends (and first time "taggers") Tony & Jeannie, again we had several fish on the boat, Tony got stuck into a good fish, but lost it when it bee-lined for the anchor ropes on the nearby fish farm, fishing and hilarity continued with Jeannie catching her first spur - another convert.....!!

The following day played out much the same, with plenty of fish coming aboard - again, below tag size

For our group, the fishing is really only part of the event. We also really look forward to the evening gatherings at the local hostleries - perfect for exchanging the days craic and filling our hungry bellies - not to mention the beers

We choose local self catering accommodation for this event, as it gives us the freedom we want when we're

not on the water, also it gives us full freezer facilities for keeping our baits fresh

To summarize.....yet again. another brilliant weekend at Etive - can't wait for the next one!

Recap – Why we are tagging these fish

Shark stocks in Scottish waters are severely threatened; data on their quantity, size, distribution, sex and growth rates are needed if stocks are to be preserved for future generations to enjoy.

Government marine fisheries research typically does not include many of the species of interest to sea anglers, especially so in the case of sharks and anecdotal evidence from anglers regarding the state of the stocks has always been unacceptable to the Scottish Government and their fisheries managers.

Four years ago SSACN introduced the Scottish Shark Tagging Programme and supported by hundreds of volunteer anglers began the long process of gathering data to try and ensure a future for sea angling as well as raise public awareness of the very poor state of the inshore marine environment.

To provide specific direction, SSACN run three major tagging events, these focus on three shark species in trouble.

They are held at different locations and times of the year, but the format is the same for all fish where you want, fish when you want, gather the data and hand that in to the organisers.

What spurdog tagging has shown so far :

- ★ # tagged in Sunart and Etive = 410
- ★ # recaptured in Sunart and Etive = 21 = 5%
- ★ # tagged ex Sunart and Etive = 244
- ★ # recaptured ex Sunart and Etive = 1 = 0.4%

Not only are recaptures 10 times more common in Sunart and Etive than outside those lochs but the fish are caught throughout the year which goes some way to indicating they are resident stocks.



And from a Coach's standpoint

David McNair – Sea Angling Coach and the SSACN Education Lead

For the past few years, the Scottish Association for Marine Sciences (SAMS) - www.smi.ac.uk have kindly donated boat time on MV Calanus, to the Tagathon to take out keen students.

This year proved more popular than ever with a waiting list of around 15 after places were filled on the boat for Sunday.

As the students had various levels of experience, angling and tagging classroom training sessions were held on the Friday where they were shown casting techniques, how to build rigs and how to tag the various kinds of shark they might catch.



Following the classroom work small groups were taking down to the shore to put the theory into practise under the supervision of coach David McNair and experienced anglers Lewis Cowie, Jamie

Natalie Mitchell – our latest volunteer

Natalie (above) practising her casting during the coaching session) with volunteer Jonathan Taylor.

Natalie who is newly resident in Oban and has a keen interest in shore fishing has volunteered to work with SSACN over the next few months

Soons and local volunteer Jonathan Taylor who also ran a smaller session the next day.

Unfortunately due to a lack of fish and inclement weather, this part of the programme had to be curtailed after a couple of hours.

On the Sunday, we took a party of twelve students boat fishing; the blustery conditions once again made life difficult and catches were quite poor with only a couple of small spurdog and thornback combined with the odd nice whiting and pouting being landed, but at least every one caught fish.

It was good to interact with the scientific community, the students were extremely interested in the details that anglers factor into their trips and what anglers regard as common knowledge - simple things like shortening hook lengths to avoid deep hooking - considerations they had not expected.

So even if the fishing was not a phenomenal success, there was a positive response from all those who took part and practical experience was successfully given to scientists who, somewhere in the future perhaps, may influence decision making regards our sport.

Three special recaptures :

This year there were three recaptures where the fish had not only had been originally tagged and recaptured in Sunart, but all had originally been tagged by Gordon Goldie - the recaptures were made by :

- ★ *Gordon himself who re-caught a fish he had tagged exactly a year before.*
- ★ *Willie Kennedy – caught the second, it had been at liberty for 3 years less 3 days.*
- ★ *Billy Findlay – caught the third, its liberty period was 70 days.*

A special “well done” to Gordon !

You too can get involved :

To join SSACN, make donations, offer your services or just to find out more of what we do, visit us at www.ssacn.org or www.tagsharks.com



You can also find the Scottish Shark Tagging Programme on Facebook or drop a line to contact@ssacn.org.