

Local Research

Sussex IFCA has been involved in collaborative research projects locally to help support a sustainable cuttlefish fishery. Further information can be found here: www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk/research-and-science

The success of such research is dependent on support from local fishers, keen to work in partnership to ensure continuation of a healthy inshore fishery.

Good Practice Guidance

Sussex IFCA are aware that there is already lots of best practice taking place on a voluntary basis within the district to improve egg survival and therefore sustainability of the fishery. The following examples are recommended:

- Ensure cuttlefish pots are returned to the water with eggs attached once the contents have been hauled
- Leave pots in the water at the end of the season until eggs have hatched
- Refrain from jet washing cuttlefish pots off on the quayside to ensure eggs aren't damaged or destroyed

By following these protocols, we hope to promote high cuttlefish recruitment and maintain a healthy inshore fishery within the Sussex district



SUSSEX IFCA CUTTLEFISH GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The fishery

Cuttlefish are one of the most commercially important species within the Sussex IFCA district, with exploitation rates nearly doubling over recent years. Most British cuttlefish catches are exported to continental Europe, although UK consumers do appear to be eating more cuttlefish, allowing a slight increase in the market.

- The average value of cuttlefish caught within Sussex ports between 2017 and 2021 was £364,403, making them the species with the 8th highest commercial value.
- The average cuttlefish live weight landings in Sussex ports between the years of 2017 and 2021 was 145.38 tonnes (8th highest species).

The inshore cuttlefish fishery operates between April and June each year when individuals come inshore to breed. The fishery operates on a commercial basis using cuttlefish traps, static nets, and otter trawls. Traps are the most common method, with a female cuttlefish used as bait to attract male cuttlefish into the trap. Cuttlefish trapping is a very selective fishery with little to no bycatch.

Throughout the breeding season a single female may produce up to 840 mature ovulated eggs, which then become attached to structures fixed to the seafloor. Because of this, the traps used to target cuttlefish often become the last egg laying sites of the captured cuttlefish. As a result, these eggs may be damaged or destroyed when the pot is hauled to the surface, resulting in a potential loss to the recruitment of the population.

Management

The Sussex IFCA Shellfish Permit Byelaw introduced in 2016 requires all permit holders to provide shellfish catch and fishing effort information. The information from these returns allow us to collate data such as catch per unit effort and is a vital part of shellfisheries' management, helping to inform future management decisions.

In order to restore habitat in the area and support a sustainable fishery, Sussex IFCA also introduced the Nearshore Trawling Byelaw 2019, prohibiting Trawling from 304 square kilometres of the nearshore area.

