

Black Seabream 2016 tagging update



Why does Sussex IFCA want to tag black bream?

Spawning black seabream, *Spondyliosoma cantharus*, are one of three conservation features for which Kingmere Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) was established in 2013. Tagging enables us to fill in some of the gaps in scientific understanding regarding the Kingmere black sea bream population.

What has happened so far?

In 2014, Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) led on 2 pilot tagging studies on black bream within Kingmere MCZ, testing external identification (ID) tags and internal acoustic tags. These were conducted in partnership with 4 local charter boat skippers and recaptures were reported by local recreational and commercial fishers. Over 2014, 891 black seabream were ID tagged and 5 bream were acoustically tagged. Subsequent to this, 26 recapture events were reported to Sussex IFCA and 4 of the acoustic tags were reheard.

The 2014 pilot studies were considered a success and so in 2015, Sussex IFCA continued both studies, expanding the ID tagging project to include 8 local charter boat skippers and 2 local recreational vessel skippers, no additional bream were acoustically tagged but 3 trips were conducted to listen for the 2014 tags. In 2015, 1'071 black seabream were ID tagged and 1 acoustic tag was reheard in the 2015 spawning season. In total, 28 tagged bream recaptures were reported to Sussex IFCA of which 8 were from fish tagged in the 2014 survey. Of these 8 fish, 4 were both captured and recaptured during the black seabream spawning season (April – June), over or near to Kingmere MCZ (<1nm).

What happened with the ID tagging in 2016?

Three Littlehampton-based charter boat skippers and 1 private vessel skipper volunteered to tag bream. The charter skippers encouraged clients to 'give up' bream they had caught to be tagged. Positions and details of tagged fish released were recorded for every fish. Between April and October, 435 black seabream were tagged. To date (1/3/17) the details of 31 recaptures have been reported to Sussex IFCA. One tagged bream was caught off the French coast and the rest were captured over, or within 5nm of Kingmere MCZ. Of the 31 recaptures, 5 were tagged in 2014 and 12



were tagged in 2015. Of the 5 bream tagged in 2014, 4 were both captured and recaptured during the bream spawning season, over to near to Kingmere MCZ (<1nm). Of the recaptured 12 bream tagged in 2015, 10 were both captured and recaptured during the spawning season, over to near to Kingmere MCZ (<1nm).

Sussex IFCA will not continue to tag black seabream from 2017, but still supports the reporting of catches of ID tagged black seabream from this study.

What about the acoustic tagging?

Sussex IFCA decided not to continue with the acoustic tagging survey in 2015 as the original 5 acoustic tag batteries ran out of power at the end of the 2015 spawning season and it was very labour intensive for the quality and quantity of data received.



What are our conclusions from this data so far?

The recapture of tagged bream during the 2016 and 2015 spawning seasons from previous tagging years and over or near to Kingmere MCZ gives initial indications of some site fidelity in black bream. Together with the commercial and recreational fishing community we have demonstrated that the tagging methods employed at Kingmere were successful in terms of relocating tagged fish. The locations of the returns are also important in supporting evidence of bream migration patterns. It had also been previously thought that black seabream over-winter west of the Channel Islands and Devon. Our study has shown no evidence to support this, but does instead indicate migration to northern France and the central English Channel.

So far, the majority of tagged fish were recovered at the Kingmere site itself. Further evidence will come to light as tagged bream continue to be reported. Our conclusions so far are preliminary and do not represent a final interpretation.

Can I be involved and help the research?

The fishing community's involvement is essential to us. If you catch an ID tagged black bream, please record the tag details, the date and the location of capture as accurately as possible (ideally the latitude and longitude). Please also release the fish to continue the study and submit the information to us at admin@sussex-ifca.gov.uk.



Our thanks to all of our bream taggers for their time and efforts, to Cefas for their training and acoustic tagging work, to Glasgow Angling Centre for their contributions and to all the recreational and commercial fishermen who have reported the tagged bream they have caught.