Lifelines

Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network - May 2011

Welcome

to this the the latest issue of SSACN's newsletter – **Lifelines**.

There have been many exciting developments over the past few months, we'll attempt to give you a flavour of them in the following pages but of course if you require any more detailed information on any particular aspect you'll find it on either of our websites – www.ssacn.org or www.tagsharks.com.

If you have any queries, questions, wish to volunteer your services, you can always reach SSACN by emailing contact@ssacn.org.

Join SSACN – just visit http://www.ssacn.org/join-ssacn/subscribe

Headlines

70+ anglers in 30 boats and kayaks take part in Inaugural Skate Tagathon Event

Win a days shark fishing.

SSNH and Argyll LEADER fund development of SSTP for a second year.

Introducing Julie Hope.

RSPB Conservation Award.

Mini tagging gun under test.

Join in and Help.

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The next Tagging Event is Sharkatag to be held around the Solway on the 24/25/26th June 2011

Register through our website www.tagsharks.com

From the Management Team.

Thanks to the incredible efforts of our volunteers SSACN and the SSTP continue to go from strength to strength – we have even gone international !

Last year we were fortunate to receive funding to support the accelerated development of the SSTP; I'm very pleased to say that the funding organizations concerned have shown their faith in the project by once again giving us their support - posting the Project Coordinator vacancy attracted some terrific candidates – keep an eye for more vacancies.

Since our last newsletter a lot of our focus has been on working with a number of other bodies in a group charged with developing a strategy for sea angling in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government.

Sea angling has had very broad cross party support in the past, it will be interesting to see what, if any, changes come about following the Holyrood elections.

SSACN's principle focus is our belief that the inshore marine environment needs regeneration if anglers and the Scottish population as a whole, is to get the maximum benefit from it.

Our greatest strength is the diverse and complementary abilities of our team; the support we receive from our Members provides continual encouragement.

But, as always, we live in 'interesting times'.

Thanks for your support.

The Inaugural Skate Tagathon

Government recognition

The Marine Atlas recently produced by the Scottish Government points out -

Many elasmobranchs tend to school in sex and age related groups, trawls can often pick up large numbers of juvenile fish in a single haul before they have had a chance to reproduce. Therefore relatively few animals actually reach breeding age, and those that do only produce large enough numbers of young later in life to help rebuild a population.

If we can identify those areas where female skate congregate and reproduce then appropriate measures can be taken to regenerate stocks. - SSACN

The Skate Tagathon is SSACN's latest addition to the tagging events held to gather data for their Scottish Shark Tagging Programme - www.tagsharks.com

Held over he 8/9/10th April, over 70 anglers took part fishing from boats and kayaks.

Over 70 fish were caught, tagged and released back into their natural environment – **ALIVE.**

For one fish, this was the ninth time it had been captured and released in the past three years.

Day one saw some fantastic action in the Sound of Jura with boats and kayaks taking 26 Common Skate to 210lb.

Regional media, Visit Scotland, local officials and the economist Alan Radford were on board our press boat to witness first hand the conservation efforts of the volunteer anglers.

A big well-done to the anglers on the charter boats from Oban – they had two fish over 200lb, a truly fantastic achievement.

The number of skate was down slightly on days two and three, however, one skate of 185lb was caught by Ayr Sea Angling Club member Steven Toner mid morning day two and caught again by SSACN's secretary Denis Kelly mid afternoon.

These fish are truly the apex predators in the area and they do like their food !

Out hats have to go off to Andy Davidson of the West Midlands who managed to get a fish of around 170lb – 180lb.

With the help of his wife to be and his mate Benjamin he managed to get the fish to the kayak, tag and then release it.

A detailed report on the Skate Tagathon will be published once all the numbers are finalized.

Win a days shark fishing in SW Scotland

Long distance sharks.

Two recent tag returns have shown just how much there is to learn about the distribution and migration patterns of our sharks.

A spurdog tagged in the Solway in 2009 was recaptured off the West coast of Portugal in April of this year and a tope, also tagged around the same time and place was recaptured off Malaga earlier this month.

We need a name for the common skate which is the new record holder for being caught and released the most times.

Following the Skate Tagathon, we now need a name for the new record holder – a male common skate currently known as tag 2412 – he has now made the trip 9 times over an 18 month period !!

To celebrate this we have decided on a little competition to be open to anyone under the age of 14 – just think up a suitable name for 2412 and draw a suitable cartoon to tell us why you picked it.

The prize will be a free day out on one of the **OnYer Marks** charter boats based in SW Scotland for the winner and their 'responsible adult'.

You can send your entry by email to contact@ssacn.org or by ordinary mail to our Secretary whose address can be found at http://www.ssacn.org/join-ssacn/subscribe.

The closing date for the competition is the 6th June 2011.

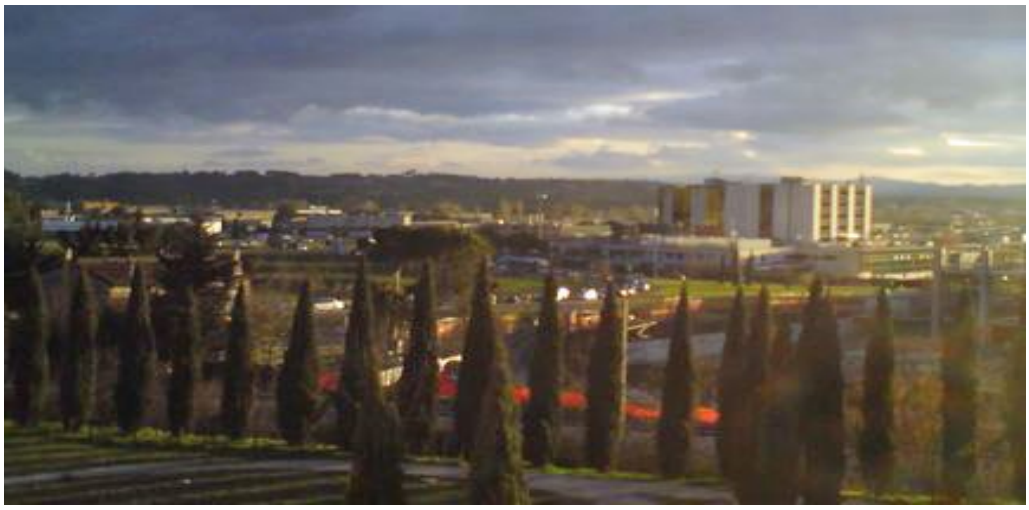
For the record :

The previous holder (8 times) was a female common skate called YOYO.

2412 was initially tagged 29/10/2009 and was recaptured on the :

05/02/2010, 21/02/2010, 04/04/2010, 31/10/2010, 08/04/2011, 09/04/2011, 16/04/2011 and finally the 18/04/2011.

He deserves better recognition than just being called 2412 !



Denis with a skate at Crinan

SSACN goes international

Earlier this year, Denis Kelly, our Secretary, was invited to visit the army language school in Perugia, Italy.

Denis was hosted by Brigadier General Di Luzio and Lt. Colonel Luppa, both veterans of Kosovo.

Introducing Denis to the student body (comprising around 90 officers ranked Major and above) Brig. Gen. Di Luzio said that the basis of the invitation was not only the subject of the talks, but the language contained in them plus the attendant message of conservation , sustainability, and the responsibility of every individual to be aware of the state of their marine environment.

He also added that listening to the varied dialects and accents in the videos from SSACN's Sharkatag and Tagathon Events would give the students an opportunity to use listening as part of their learning experience.

During the talks the students were encouraged to ask questions at any time, they did and raised some good points.

But there is always one !

During a talk on shark finning one Major asked if it was true that shark fin soup was an aphrodisiac Denis asked had he tried it and did it work - he said yes and no!

Denis then assured him that there was an over the counter product that was cheaper and effective, the students broke into laughter and applause.

All in all Denis spent a couple of very enjoyable weeks at the school presenting on sharks in general and the work of SSACN / SSTP in particular.

Denis also undertook a series of one on one sessions reviewing presentations the students had prepared for an upcoming exam on which their future careers depended –

some responsibility !

Our grateful thanks go to the Officers, Students, Staff and Teachers of the Military School Perugia for inviting us along and ***covering all our costs*** *- an incredible act of generosity and a tremendous vote of confidence in our work.*

They also go to the owners and the staff at the Hotel le Quattro Stagioni Perugia as well as to Professoressas Julie Anne Hobson and Chiara Kelly without the input and generosity of all concerned this opportunity would not have been possible.

This type of event was not only a first for SSACN and the SSTP, but also a first for the School itself – it is the first talk to be given at the School by a non military presenter - so there was a degree of nervousness on both sides of the lectern.

The school presented Denis with a signed print of an original painting by Giampietro Petruccioli which depicts the Cloisters of the female monastery of Saint Giuliana in which the school is situated.

The last night of my incredible experience in the company of this magnificent group of Officers and Gentlemen was rounded off by a champagne dinner in my honour – a humbling experience – Denis Kelly

Second year funding for Argyll post

Last year we were very fortunate to receive funding support from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the Argyll and the Islands LEADER Programme.

This really accelerated the progress of the SSTP and enabled successful data gathering and reporting infrastructures to be put in place. It also enabled us to undertake a number of activities to increase public awareness of the issues related to Scottish sharks through school / angling club visits, websites and social media etc.

Thanks to the commitment of all those who have supported SSACN and the SSTP Events / activities, we have been able to secure a second funding package from the same organizations.

We are very grateful for everyone's efforts.

brings a new Project Coordinator – Julie Hope

As our previous 'sharkman' James Thorburn has taken up the unmissable opportunity to undertake a PhD we were faced with the challenge of recruiting his successor.

Once again We were very pleased with the response we had when we advertised the position – with over 80 applications the quality was fantastic and the competition very strong, getting down to a short-list of 7 gave Ian Burrett, our Projects Director, many a headache !

Following a day long series of interviews in Glasgow we are very pleased to announce the appointment of Julie Hope.

Julie became involved with conservation work whilst working as a volunteer teacher in Malawi, following her return to Scotland she returned to university to study further, entering as a general zoology/conservation/marine biology student and becoming increasingly pulled towards marine biology.

Julie's work will involve the acquisition / validation / analysis on of the tagging data, distributing tags to anglers, the training of taggers as well as developing and delivering suitable outreach and communication initiatives.

The main focus for this year will be to help determine SSACN's research direction and position on the many consultations, assessments and initiatives we can see ahead of us.

Apart from her educational qualifications Julie has also fished Sharkatag and the Skate Tagathon Events and also relaxes with a bit of shore fishing.

Her other interests include - photography (nature and wildlife), snowboarding, diving, going to the gym and reading.

Other SSACN Opportunities

SSACN are tremendously proud and appreciative of the incredible level of support we receive from anglers who commit so much time and effort in order to tag the various species.

To support the efforts of the anglers, we are always looking to recruit more volunteers to help with the 'back room' activities of analyzing the data and communicating our findings.

We are also looking for support across the board – helping at Events, extending the use of social media, locating and posting photos, videos or articles of interest etc etc.

You can help

Spare a few hours a week of your enthusiasm, abilities, knowledge etc

and make a difference !

RSPB launch Awards

RSPB Scotland is launching the Nature of Scotland Awards to celebrate achievements in Scottish nature conservation.

Scotland is world renowned for its incredible nature, the conservation charity wants to recognize projects and people who have worked hard to maintain this.

Six different awards will celebrate a wide range of outstanding achievements in the preservation or restoration of our precious natural heritage.

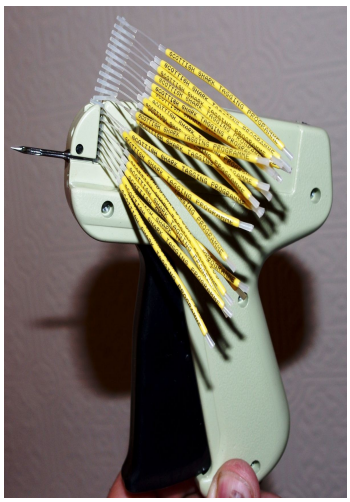
Among the categories is the marine award, which recognises exceptional contributions to the conservation or sustainable management of Scotland's precious marine resources.

If you feel you work with, or know of, an organization, group or individual who has participated in an activity that has aided Scottish nature conservation, RSPB Scotland would like to hear from you.

Nominations open 2nd May and the awards are free to enter. For more information visit www.rspb.org.uk/natureofscotland

Don't forget to vote !

The mini tagging gun



The SSTP is always looking for ways to continually improve so we have recently been testing a new miniature tagging gun.

The big questions of course were just how robust a solution would it be and would the tags be placed securely enough ?

Our research gave very positive results, a couple of recaptures have been made of fish tagged during the trial and both the tags and the fish were found to be in good condition.

The research was independently confirmed to some extent when Gordon Goldie during a fishing trip in Loch Sunart recaptured a common skate weighing 158lbs which had a small green tag of the same type as we will be using attached to it.

On reporting the tag, Gordon found it had been inserted some two and a half years earlier by MBA (Marine Biology Association - www.mba.ac.uk) researchers.

The tag was in very good condition and all info was clearly visible.

Our new yellow mini tags are only 50mm long, but have a much smaller entry point than the larger "dart" type tags. Instead of a "V" shape point, these have a "T" shape and are similar to the ones found holding new pairs of socks together, or holding price tags to clothing.

The tag is inserted using a small Kimble gun and is very easy to use; one of its greatest benefits is that there is a limit to how far the needle can penetrate the fish, thus making it safer for both angler and fish.

A short training session will be required for anyone receiving a new tagging gun in order to make sure they are used safely. We are busy training "Trainers" just now and are looking to roll the new kits out to everyone in the very near future.

You can follow SSACN and the SSTP on our websites at

www.ssacn.org

www.tagsharks.com

or by joining the 400+ valued supporters on Facebook

by using this shortcut

http://on.fb.me/lOl8U8

In brief - what's next for SSACN and the SSTP

For the next few months we will focus on the following initiatives :

Input to the development of the criteria which will determine the selection of Scottish Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

Providing input to the Recreational Sea Angling Strategy Group set up to identify the way forward for the sport and how best to realize its economic potential.

Monitoring the development of the National Marine Plan which will set out the strategic objectives for the Scottish marine area.

Maintaining our membership of The Marine Strategy Forum set up to provide an integrated strategic approach to the management, use and protection of Scotland's seas and coasts.

On the technical front, we will be investing significant amount of energy increasing our options for communicating our progress by extending the use of social media and different technical platforms.

The major challenge for the Projects team is going to be the analysis of the tremendous amount of data gathered over the last few months and planning the next areas for research.

As the SSTP is always looking for ways to continually improve we shall be complete testing the new miniature tagging guns and begin the roll-out of them.

And of course, the Events Team will be running both Sharkatag and Spurdog Tagathon 2011 Events.

As always, so much to do, so little time ! If you would like to contribute your skills, just drop an email to contact@ssacn.org.

As usual, any errors, omissions or other mistakes are the fault of the editor – any queries or contributions for the next newsletter should be emailed to contact@ssacn.org.