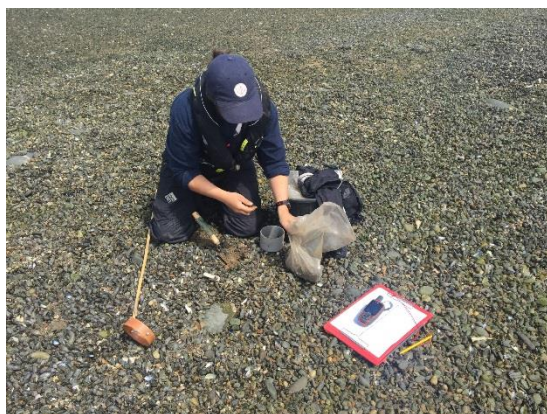


Devon and Severn IFCA News

2019 Taw Torridge Mussel Surveys

Devon and Severn IFCA undertakes annual mussel surveys in the Taw Torridge Estuary



D&S IFCA Officers are currently undertaking surveys of the mussel beds found in the Taw-Torridge estuary in North Devon. The mussel beds in the estuary form important habitats for many species, particularly as a significant source of food for over-wintering and migratory wading bird populations. These birds are one of the priority features of the estuary's designation as a [Site of Special Scientific Interest \(SSSI\)](#).

Two of the beds are located within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), the [Bideford to Foreland Point Marine Conservation Zone \(MCZ\)](#) and [Braunton Burrows Special Area of Conservation \(SAC\)](#). As the relevant authority D&S IFCA monitors any changes to the mussel stock and the assessment informs D&S IFCA's current and future management measures. The existing measures were established by Natural England (NE) with the assistance of D&S IFCA and were introduced following significant losses of mussels in 2014, due to the winter storms that year, with the aim of protecting the remaining stock for birds and the local fisheries. The measures include a limit of 500kg of mussels that can be removed from the estuary beds each month. Anyone wishing to remove mussel commercially must inform D&S IFCA and NE one month in advance, and subsequently report the amount and location of any mussel harvested. More information can be found in D&S IFCA's [2019-2020 Annual Plan](#).

The surveys are conducted by small teams of officers and volunteers, who walk across the mussel beds on low spring tides mapping their outline using GPS and collecting data on the distribution of mussel over multiple transects. If the beds are sufficiently dense the team will also take samples. These samples are then measured and weighed. Overall these data will provide information on the status of the beds whether there has been good recruitment of juvenile mussels (spat), the quantity of commercially sized mussels, and spatial information on whether the beds are shrinking or expanding.

For more detail on how these surveys are conducted and the location of the beds please see some of our [previous reports on our website](#). A report on the 2019 Taw-Torridge Mussel Survey will become publicly available within due course.

Keeping you informed

Please keep an eye on our website for updates on consultations, information about potential changes to current byelaws and the potential development of new byelaws.

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