

Devon and Severn IFCA News

Environment Officers Carry Out Observer Trips on Ring-Netting Vessels.

As part of a Monitoring and Control Plan for Allis shad in the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries Special Area of Conservation, a number of observer trips have been carried out on a ring-netting vessel based in the port of Plymouth.



Immature Allis shad (©R.Hillman)

The Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) for Netting in the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC identified the need to carry out a [Monitoring and Control Plan \(M&C Plan\)](#) to gather more information on effort levels and possible bycatch of Allis shad. This included all types of netting, from fixed and drift nets, to ring netting.

One of the actions which came out of the plan was to carry out observations on ring-netting vessels based in Plymouth, to identify any bycatch in this fishery. This is a night-time fishery predominately targeting sardines, with anchovy occasionally being caught, and takes place during winter months. The fishing is carried out within Plymouth Sound and various bays along the Devon and Cornwall coast.

Three trips were undertaken, one in December and two in January, by D&S IFCA's Environment Officers. Unfortunately, no sardines were caught during these trips and therefore sampling for any possible bycatch could not take place. Due to the nature of the fishery catches are not made on every trip. The nets are only deployed if large numbers of fish are located using sonar and echosounders, and in areas that are far enough from the shoreline to fish safely. The weather plays a large role in the fishery, if the conditions are too rough the fish break up or move into the estuaries, it is also not possible to shoot the nets in close to the shore safely. Due to the weather conditions, no more surveys have been carried out in February.

As well as the ring-netting observer surveys, questionnaires have been sent to all netting permit holders who may fish within the Plymouth Sound to gather more information on effort levels. These results will be compiled and fed into a M&C Plan summary report.

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