

### 5.3.9 Blonde ray (*Raja brachyura*) in Division 7.e (western English Channel)

#### ICES stock advice

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, landings should be no more than 333 tonnes in each of the years 2017 and 2018. ICES cannot quantify the corresponding catches.

#### Stock development over time

Landings ranged from 228 to 731 tonnes between 2009 and 2015. There are currently no stock size indicators.

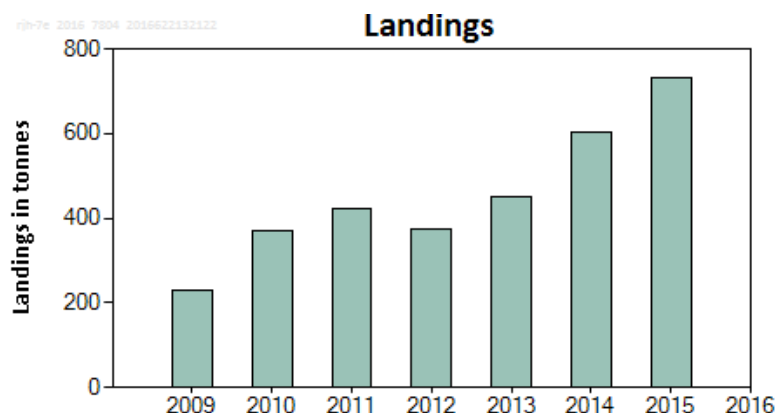


Figure 5.3.9.1 Blonde ray in Division 7.e. ICES estimated landings (in tonnes).

#### Stock and exploitation status

Table 5.3.9.1 Blonde ray in Division 7.e. State of the stock and fishery relative to reference points.

		Fishing pressure			Stock size					
		2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015			
Maximum sustainable yield	$F_{MSY}$	?	?	?	Undefined	MSY	?	?	?	Undefined
Precautionary approach	$F_{pa}$ , $F_{lim}$	?	?	?	Undefined	$B_{pa}$ , $B_{lim}$	?	?	?	Undefined
Management plan	$F_{MGT}$	-	-	-	Not applicable	$SSB_{MGT}$	-	-	-	Not applicable
Qualitative evaluation	-	?	?	?	Unknown	-	?	?	?	Unknown

#### Catch options

The ICES framework for category 5 stocks was applied (ICES, 2012). For stocks without information on abundance or exploitation, ICES considers that a precautionary reduction of catches should be implemented unless there is ancillary information clearly indicating that the current level of exploitation is appropriate for the stock. The precautionary buffer was applied previously (ICES, 2014) and is not applied again this year.

The recent advised landings for 2015 and 2016 were originally derived using landings statistics from 2011-2013. In 2016, a review of the landing statistics of elasmobranchs (ICES 2016a) was conducted. As a result, the basis which was used to provide advice in 2014 for 2015 and 2016 has been adjusted to account for the update in the landing statistics in the period 2011-2013.

Discarding is known to take place, but ICES cannot quantify the corresponding catch. In addition, discard survival, which is likely to occur, has not been estimated.

**Table 5.3.9.2** Blonde ray in Division 7.e. For stocks in ICES data categories 3–6, one catch option is provided.

Recent advised landings for 2015 and 2016			310 t
Recent advised landings adjusted (2015–2016)* [310 t x 1.075]			333 t
Discard rate			Unknown
Precautionary buffer	Not applied		-
Landings advice**			333 t

\*Recent advised landings adjusted for the revision of the landings statistics in 2011-2013

\*\* (Recent advised landings adjusted).

### Basis of the advice

**Table 5.3.9.3** Blonde ray in Division 7.e. The basis of the advice.

Advice basis	Precautionary approach.
Management plan	There is no management plan for this stock.

### Quality of the assessment

There is no assessment for this stock.

### Issues relevant for the advice

The quality of landings data has generally improved in recent years, especially following the WKSHARKS workshop in which ICES revised elasmobranch landings data for the period 2009-2015 (ICES, 2016a,b). However, data for *Raja brachyura* and *Raja montagui* are often confounded. The increase in landings from 2009 to 2015 might have been also influenced by the introduction of mandatory species-specific reporting of skate landings.

Blonde ray is an important commercial species, accounting for about a third of the skate landings in this division. It is a bycatch in demersal fisheries, but may be targeted in areas of high local abundance due to its large size and high market value.

It is a coastal and inner shelf species that has a patchy distribution and is often found in greater abundance in sand bank habitats. The stock structure of blonde ray in the western English Channel is uncertain, and it is unclear as to whether it is a discrete stock or associated with the neighboring stocks in the eastern Channel/southern North Sea or the Bristol Channel/Irish Sea. Until the stock structure is clarified, ICES provides advice for this division.

Trawl survey data in Lyme Bay (UK CAHREMAR) indicate that the relative abundance of *Raja brachyura* was stable over the period 1989–2011 (Burt *et al.*, 2013), but this survey no longer operates and so recent data are lacking. Time-series data from the recently initiated English survey and planned French survey in this area might provide additional information on this stock in the future.

### Reference points

No reference points are defined for this stock.

**Basis of the assessment**

**Table 5.3.9.4** Blonde ray in Division 7.e. The basis of the assessment.

ICES stock data category	5 ( <a href="#">ICES, 2016c</a> )
Assessment type	No assessment (ICES, 2016b)
Input data	Landings data 2009–2015
Discards and bycatch	Discarding is known to take place but cannot be quantified.
Indicators	None
Other information	UK CAHREMAR survey (discontinued)
Working group	Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes ( <a href="#">WGEE</a> )

**Information from stakeholders**

No information has been provided.

**History of advice, catch, and management**

**Table 5.3.9.5** Blonde ray in Division 7.e. History of ICES advice and ICES estimates of landings\*\*. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Predicted landings corresp. to advice	ICES species-specific landings: minimum estimate based on reported landings*
2011	No specific advice		424
2012	No specific advice		376
2013	No TAC, species-specific measures needed, catch to decrease by at least 20%	-	450
2014	No new advice, same as 2013	-	604
2015	<i>Status quo</i> for skate TAC	310	731
2016	No new advice, same as 2015	310	
2017	Precautionary approach	≤333	
2018	Precautionary approach (same value as advised catches for 2017)	≤333	

\* Data revised in 2016 (ICES, 2016a).

\*\* There is no a specific TAC for this stock. Fishing opportunities are managed through an overall TAC by management unit, which includes all species of skates and rays.

**History of catch and landings**

The distribution of this stock does not extend into the NEAFC regulatory area.

**Table 5.3.9.6** Blonde ray in Division 7.e. Catch distribution by fleet in 2015 as estimated by ICES.

Catch (2015)	Landings				Discards
	10% beam trawl	53% bottom trawls	32% fixed-nets	4% other gear	
Unknown	731 tonnes				Discarding is known to take place but cannot be quantified.

**Table 5.3.9.7** Blonde ray in Division 7.e. History of landings. ICES estimates of landings by country (in tonnes). Data revised in 2016 (ICES, 2016a).

Year	Belgium	UK	Ireland	Netherlands	France	Total
2009	6	164			58	228
2010	3	217			152	372
2011	5	208	0.05		211	424
2012	5	177	0.52	0.15	194	376
2013	6	223		0.07	221	450
2014	3	296	0.13		305	604
2015	7	391	2		331	731

## Summary of the assessment

There is no assessment for this stock in this area.

## Sources and references

Burt G. J., Ellis J. R., Harley B. F., and Kupschus S. 2013. The FV Carhelmar beam trawl survey of the western English Channel (1989–2011): History of the survey, data availability and the distribution and relative abundance of fish and commercial shellfish. Science Series Technical Report, CEFAS Lowestoft, 151: 139 pp.

ICES. 2012. ICES Implementation of Advice for Data-limited Stocks in 2012 in its 2012 Advice. ICES CM 2012/ACOM:68. 42 pp.

ICES. 2014. Blonde ray (*Raja brachyura*) in Division VIIe (Western English Channel). *In* Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2014. ICES Advice 2014, Book 5, Section 5.3.29.3.

ICES. 2016a. Report of the Workshop to compile and refine catch and landings of elasmobranchs (WKSHARKS), 19–22 January 2016, Lisbon, Portugal. ICES CM 2016/ACOM:40. 69 pp.

ICES. 2016b. Report of the Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF), 15–24 June 2016, Lisbon, Portugal. ICES CM 2016/ACOM:20.

ICES. 2016c. General context of ICES advice. *In* Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2016. ICES Advice 2016, Book 1, Section 1.2.