

ECOREGION Celtic Sea and west of Scotland
STOCK Thornback ray (*Raja clavata*) in Division VIIe (Western English Channel)

Advice for 2015 and 2016

Based on the ICES approach to data-limited stocks, ICES advises that landings should not increase based on estimated species-specific landings; this would imply landings of 260 t in each of 2015 and 2016. Discarding is known to take place but has not been quantified, and there is some discard survival.

Stock status

Fishing pressure		
	2011–2013	
MSY (F_{MSY})	?	Unknown
Precautionary approach (F_{pa} , F_{lim})	?	Unknown
Qualitative evaluation	?	Unknown
Stock size		
	2011–2013	
MSY ($B_{trigger}$)	?	Unknown
Precautionary approach (B_{pa} , B_{lim})	?	Unknown
Qualitative evaluation	→	Stable or increasing

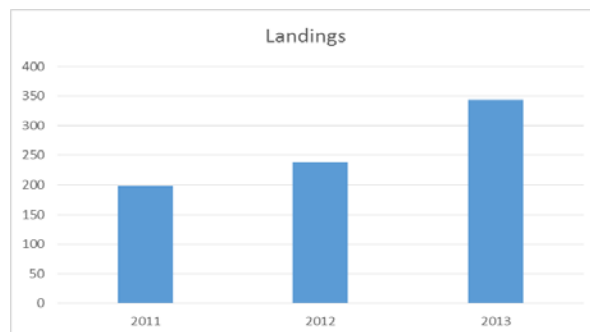


Figure 5.3.29.6.1 *Raja clavata* in Division VIIe. ICES estimated species-specific landings for 2011–2013 (in tonnes). Species-specific data were not available for earlier years.

Trawl survey data in Lyme Bay indicated that the relative abundance of thornback ray was stable or increasing over the period 1989–2011 (Burt *et al.*, 2013). This survey no longer operates, thus recent data are lacking.

Management plans

There is no management plan for this stock or any skate stock in the ICES area.

Biology

This is a medium bodied skate, found in the eastern Atlantic to South Africa, Mediterranean, Mid-Atlantic Ridge south from Iceland, and in the southwestern Indian Ocean. It is the second most vulnerable of the main commercial ray species in this area according to a Productivity–Susceptibility Analysis (McCully *et al.*, 2013). The species is mainly found on hard seabed (e.g. gravel and pebble), in areas of intermediate to strong tidal currents at depths of 7–192 m (Ellis *et al.*, 2005). Lyme Bay is thought to be one of the main areas of abundance in the western English Channel (Silva *et al.*, 2014).

The fisheries

This is one of the most commercially important ray species in this division. It is caught mainly close to shore.

Catch distribution	Total catch (2013) is unknown, estimated landings: 344 t. Discarding is known to take place but cannot be quantified.
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Quality considerations

The methods applied to derive quantitative advice for data-limited stocks are expected to evolve as they are further developed and validated.

The stock structure of thornback ray in the western English Channel is unclear, and it is unclear as to whether it is discrete or associated with the neighbouring stocks in the eastern Channel/southern North Sea or the Bristol Channel/Irish Sea. Until the stock structure is clarified, ICES provides advice separately for Division VIIe.

Scientific basis

Stock data category	5.2.0 (ICES, 2014a).
Assessment type	No assessment.
Input data	Estimate landings 2011–2013.
Discards and bycatch	Discarding is known to take place but cannot be quantified.
Indicators	UK CARLHEMAR survey (discontinued).
Other information	None.
Working group	Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF).

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Reference points

No reference points have been defined for this stock.

Outlook for 2015 and 2016

No analytic assessment can be presented for this stock. Therefore, fishing possibilities cannot be projected.

ICES approach to data-limited stocks

For data-limited 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.

For this stock, a survey conducted in 1989–2011 suggests stable or increasing abundance overall during this period. Therefore, ICES advises that catches should not increase in relation to the last three years' average, corresponding to landings of no more than 260 t in each of 2015 and 2016.

Discards are known to take place but cannot be quantified, and there is some discard survival; therefore total catches cannot be calculated

Additional considerations

Comparison of the basis of previous assessment and advice

In 2012, ICES provided advice for this stock as part of larger stock in the North Sea ecoregion. The advice this year is specific to Division VIIe and is based on the data-limited stocks (DLS) method 5.2. In 2014, for the first time, ICES provides a quantitative landings advice. This is because more complete landings data are now available.

Sources

- 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.
- Ellis, J. R., Cruz-Martinez, A., Rackham, B. D., and Rogers, S. I. 2005. The distribution of chondrichthyan fishes around the British Isles and implications for conservation. *Journal of Northwest Atlantic Fishery Science*, 35: 195–213. ICES.
2012. Report of the Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF), 19–26 June 2012, Lisbon, Portugal. ICES CM 2012/ACOM:19.
- ICES. 2014a. Advice basis. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2014. ICES Advice 2014, Book 1, Section 1.2.
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- McCully, S.R., Scott, F., Ellis, J.R., Pilling, G.M. 2013. Productivity and Susceptibility Analysis: Application and suitability for data poor assessment of elasmobranchs in Northern Euro-pean seas. *Collective Volume of Scientific Papers ICCAT*, 69: 1679–1698.
- Silva, J. F., McCully, S. R., Ellis, J. R., and Kupschus, S. 2014. Demersal elasmobranchs in the western English Channel (ICES Division VIIe). Working Document presented at the Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF) meeting, 17–26 June 2014; 2014/21.

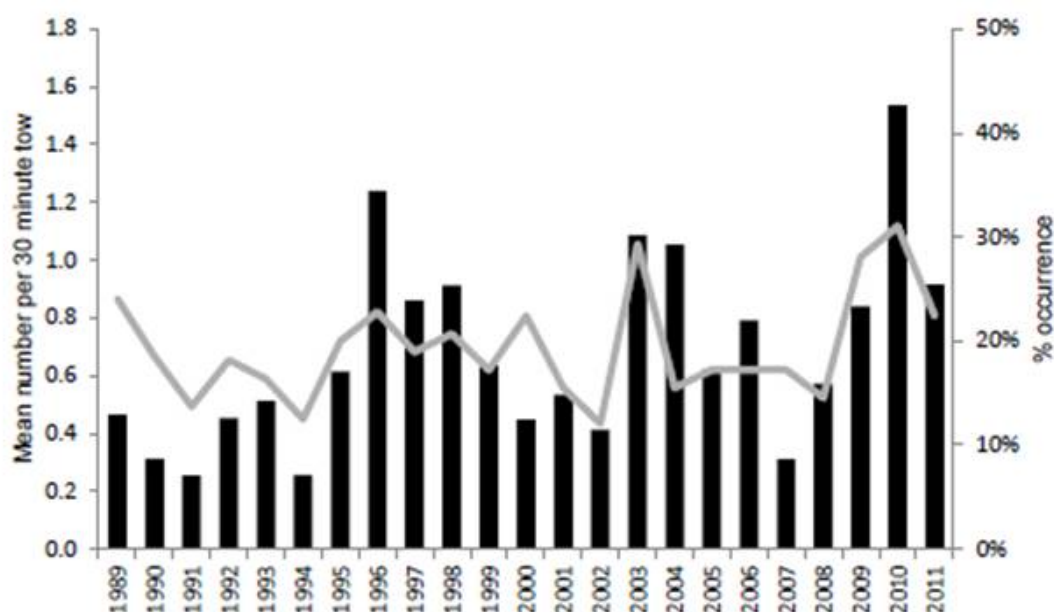


Figure 5.3.29.6.2 *Raja clavata* in Subarea VIIe. Relative abundance of *Raja clavata* in the survey area (from Burt *et al.*, 2013).

Table 5.3.29.6.1 *Raja clavata* in Division VIIe (western English Channel). ICES advice, management, and landings.

Year	ICES advice	Predicted catch corresp. to advice	ICES species-specific landings: minimum estimate based on reported landings
2006	Zero catch	0	
2007	Zero catch	0	
2008	No new advice, same as 2007		
2009	<i>Status quo</i> catch		
2010	No new advice, same as 2009		
2011	<i>Status quo</i> catch		198
2012	No new advice, same as 2011		239
2013	No TAC, species-specific measures needed, catch could increase by max. 20%	-	344
2014	No new advice, same as 2013	-	
2015	No increase in landings from average of last 3 years' landings	260	
2016	No new advice, same as 2015	260	

Weights in tonnes.

Table 5.3.29.6.1 *Raja clavata* in Division VIIe (western English Channel). ICES estimated landings for 2011–2013 (tonnes) by country. Species-specific data were not available for earlier years.

	2011	2012	2013
Belgium	3.3	4.4	4.5
France	96.9	107.3	186.6
Ireland			0.2
Netherlands			2
UK (E,W&NI)	98.0	127.4	151.2
Total	198	239	344
Average (2011–2013)	260		