Blonde ray (*Raja brachyura*) in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g (Irish Sea, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea North)

ICES advice on fishing opportunities

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, landings should be no more than 716 tonnes in each of the years 2021 and 2022. ICES cannot quantify the corresponding catches.

Note: This advice sheet is abbreviated due to the COVID-19 disruption. The previous advice issued for 2019 and 2020 is attached as Annex 1.
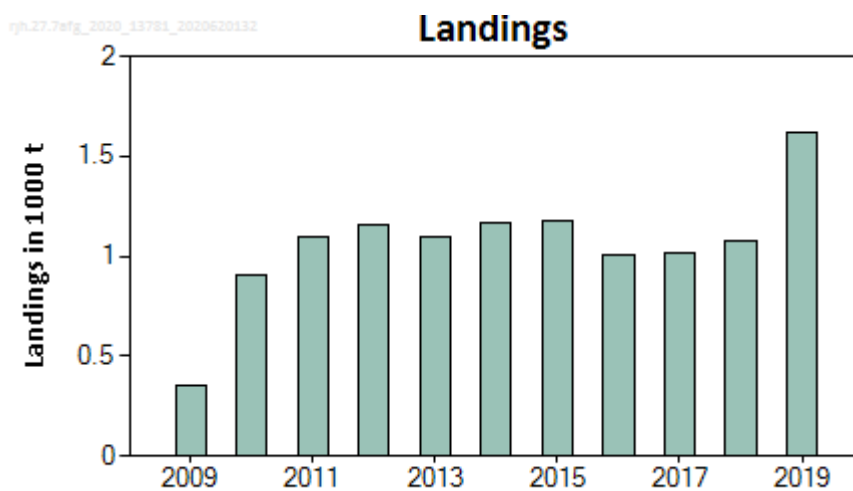
Stock development over time

Figure 1   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. ICES estimated species-specific landings.

Stock and exploitation status

Table 1   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. State of the stock and the fishery relative to reference points.

		Fishing pressure				Stock size		
		2017	2018	2019		2017	2018	2019
Maximum sustainable yield	F_{MSY}	?	?	? Unknown	MSY $B_{trigger}$	?	?	? Unknown
Precautionary approach	F_{pa}, F_{lim}	?	?	? Unknown	B_{pa}, B_{lim}	?	?	? Unknown
Management plan	F_{MGT}	—	—	— Not applicable	B_{MGT}	—	—	— Not applicable
Qualitative evaluation	-	?	?	? Unknown	-	?	?	? Unknown

Catch scenarios

The stock size and fishing pressure status relative to reference points is unknown. The precautionary buffer was last applied in 2018 and thus not applied in 2020.

Discarding is known to take place; however, ICES cannot quantify the corresponding dead catch.

Table 2   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. The basis for the catch scenarios.

Advised landings for 2019–2020 (issued in 2018)		716 tonnes
Discard rate		Unknown
Precautionary buffer	Not applied	-
Landings advice *		716 tonnes
% advice change **		0%

* Advised landings for 2019–2020.
** Advice value for 2021 and 2022 relative to the advice value for 2019 and 2020.

History of the advice, catch, and management

Table 3   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. History of ICES advice and ICES estimates of landings.* All weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Landings corresp. to advice	ICES landings
2011	No specific advice		1099
2012	No specific advice		1160
2013	No TAC, species-specific measures needed, catch to decrease by at least 20%	-	1097
2014	No new advice, same as 2013	-	1170
2015	Decrease at least 20% from the average of the last three years	897	1172
2016	No new advice, same as 2015	897	1004
2017	Precautionary approach	≤ 895	1020
2018	Precautionary approach (same value as advised catches for 2017)	≤ 895	1077
2019	Precautionary approach	≤ 716	1616
2020	Precautionary approach	≤ 716	
2021	Precautionary approach	≤ 716	
2022	Precautionary approach	≤ 716	

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

Summary of the assessment

There is no assessment for this stock in this area.

Sources and references

ICES. 2020. Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF). ICES Scientific Reports, 2:77. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.7470.

Recommended citation: ICES. 2020. Blonde ray (*Raja brachyura*) in divisions 7.a and 7.f-g (Irish Sea, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea North). *In* Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2020. ICES Advice 2020, rjh.27.7afg. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.5793.

Annex 1

ICES Advice on fishing opportunities, catch, and effort
Celtic Seas Ecoregion
rjh.27.7afg

ICES
CIEM

31 October 2018
https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.4579

Blonde ray (*Raja brachyura*) in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g (Irish Sea, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea North)

ICES advice on fishing opportunities

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, landings should be no more than 716 tonnes in each of the years 2019 and 2020. ICES cannot quantify the corresponding catches.

Stock development over time

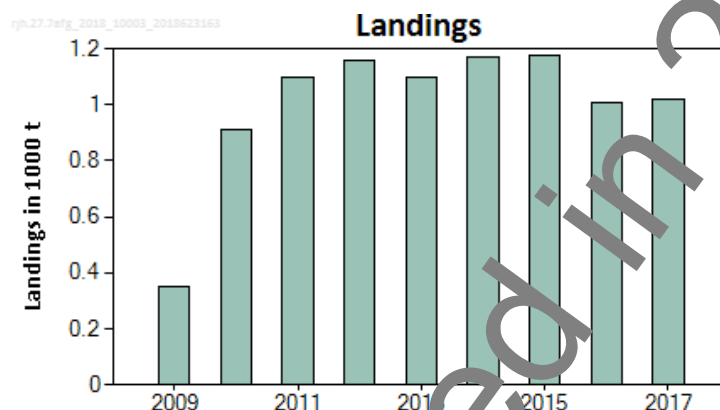Landings have been at a similar level since 2010.

Figure 1   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. ICES estimated species-specific landings.

Stock and exploitation status

ICES cannot assess the stock and exploitation status relative to maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and precautionary approach (PA) reference points because the reference points are undefined.

Table 1   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. State of the stock and fishery relative to reference points.

		Fishing pressure				Stock size			
		2015	2016	2017			2015	2016	2017
Maximum sustainable yield	F_{MSY}	?	?	? Unknown	MSY $B_{trigger}$		?	?	? Unknown
Precautionary approach	F_{pa}, F_{lim}	?	?	? Unknown	B_{pa}, B_{lim}		?	?	? Unknown
Management plan	F_{MGT}	–	–	– Not applicable	B_{MGT}		–	–	– Not applicable
Qualitative evaluation	-	?	?	? Unknown	-		?	?	? Unknown

Catch scenarios

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 last applied in 2014, and has therefore been applied again in 2018.

Discarding is known to take place, but ICES cannot quantify the corresponding dead catch.

Table 2   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. The basis for the catch scenarios.*

Advised landings for 2017–2018 (issued in 2016)		895 t
Discard rate		Unknown
Precautionary buffer	Applied	0.8
Landings advice **		716 t
% Advice change ***		−20%

* The figures in the table are rounded. Calculations were done with unrounded inputs and computed values may not match exactly when calculated using the rounded figures in the table.
** [Advised landings for 2017–2018] × [precautionary buffer].
*** Advice value for 2019 relative to advice value for 2018.

The advised landings for 2019 and 2020 are lower than advised for 2017 and 2018 because the precautionary buffer has been applied.

Basis of the advice

Table 3   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. The basis of the advice.

Advice basis	Precautionary approach.
Management plan	ICES is not aware of any agreed precautionary management plan for blonde ray in this area.

Quality of the assessment

The quality of landings data has generally improved in recent years, especially following the WKSHARK2 workshop in which ICES revised elasmobranch landings data for the period 2009–2015 (ICES, 2016a). However, data for blonde ray and spotted ray are often confounded. The increase in landings from 2009 to 2010 is influenced by the introduction of mandatory species-specific reporting of skate landings. Stock-specific landings data are not available before 2009.

In the UK (E&W)-BTS-Q3 survey, the species is caught most regularly in the Bristol Channel and off the east coast of Ireland. Catch rates for blonde ray in this survey have increased (ICES, 2018); however, the survey is not considered a reliable stock size indicator for quantitative advice, as it has limited coverage in areas of local abundance and larger individuals are not sampled effectively by beam trawls.

Issues relevant for the advice

Blonde ray is a coastal and inner shelf species that has a patchy distribution and is often found in greater abundance on sandbanks.

Blonde ray is an important commercial species in this area. It is taken in trawl fisheries targeting the overall skate complex and is a bycatch in various demersal fisheries. It may also be targeted in areas of high local abundance, due to its large size and high market value.

Reference points

No reference points are defined for this stock.

Basis of the assessment

Table 4   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. The basis of the assessment.

ICES stock data category	5 (ICES, 2016b).
Assessment type	No assessment (ICES, 2018).
Input data	Landings data 2009–2017.
Discards and bycatch	Discarding is known to take place but has not been fully quantified.
Indicators	None.
Other information	UK (E&W)-BTS-Q3.
Working group	Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF)

Information from stakeholders

There is no additional available information.

History of the advice, catch, and management

Table 5   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. History of ICES advice and ICES estimates of landings.* All weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Landings coresp. to advice	ICES species-specific landings: minimum estimate based on reported landings
2011	No specific advice		1099
2012	No specific advice		1160
2013	No TAC, species-specific measures needed, catch to decrease by at least 20%	-	1097
2014	No new advice, same as 2013	-	1170
2015	Decrease at least 20% from last 3 years' average	897	1172
2016	No new advice, same as 2015	897	1004
2017	Precautionary approach	≤ 895	1019
2018	Precautionary approach (same value as advised catches for 2017)	≤ 895	
2019	Precautionary approach	≤ 716	
2020	Precautionary approach	≤ 716	

* There is no 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 the catch and landings

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

Table 6   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. Catch distribution by fleet in 2017 as estimated by ICES.

Catch (2017)	Landings				Discards
Unknown	beam trawl	other trawls	nets	other gear	Unquantified
	39%	54%	6%	< 1%	
	1019 tonnes				

Table 7   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. History of landings; ICES estimates of landings by country (in tonnes).

Year	Belgium	UK	Ireland	France	Total
2009	170	138	5	36	350
2010	210	226	402	73	910
2011	313	273	382	131	1099
2012	404	261	407	87	1160
2013	406	262	377	52	1097
2014	351	229	420	170	1170
2015	359	245	351	218	1172
2016	313	245	171	275	1004
2017	338	270	154	257	1019

Summary of the assessment

There is no assessment for this stock in this area.

Sources and references

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

ICES. 2016a. Report of the Workshop to compile and refine catch and landings of elasmobranchs (WKSHARK2), 19–22 January 2016, Lisbon, Portugal. ICES CM 2016/ACOM:40. 69 pp.

ICES. 2016b. Advice basis. *In* Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2016. ICES Advice 2016, Book 1, Section 1.2.

ICES. 2018. Report of the Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF), 19–28 June 2018, Lisbon, Portugal. ICES CM 2018/ACOM:16. 1306 pp.