

Blonde ray (*Raja brachyura*) in Subarea 6 and Division 4.a (North Sea and West of Scotland)

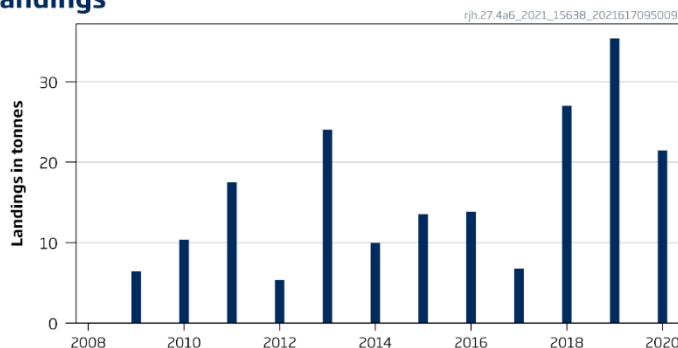
ICES advice on fishing opportunities

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, landings should be no more than 7 tonnes in each of the years 2022 and 2023. ICES cannot quantify the corresponding catches.

Stock development over time

ICES cannot assess the stock and exploitation status relative to maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and precautionary approach (PA) reference points because information to define reference points is not available.

Landings



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 where there is no ancillary information clearly indicating that the current level of exploitation is appropriate for the stock. The precautionary buffer was last applied in 2018 and has therefore been considered this year. The stock status relative to candidate reference points is unknown; therefore, the precautionary buffer was applied in the advice

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

Table 1 Blonde ray in Subarea 6 and Division 4.a. The basis for the catch scenarios*.

Advised catch for 2020 and 2021 issued in 2019	9 tonnes	
Discard rate	Unknown	
Precautionary buffer	Applied	0.8
Landings advice **	7 tonnes	
% 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 2020 and 2021] × [precautionary buffer].

*** Advice value for 2022 and 2023 relative to the advice value for 2020 and 2021.

The advised landings have decreased by 20% due to the application of the precautionary buffer.

Basis of the advice

Table 2 Blonde ray in Subarea 6 and Division 4.a. 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

Species identification issues between blonde ray and spotted ray may affect landings, observer, and survey data.

Available survey data (NS-IBTS-Q1 [G1022], NS-IBTS-Q3 [G2829], and the IE-IGFS-WIBTS-Q4 [G7212]) have low and variable catch rates for both abundance and biomass (ICES, 2021a). As such, current survey data are not considered indicative of trends.

Issues relevant for the advice

Blonde ray is a larger-bodied coastal species that is also taken in recreational fisheries, but the quantities of retained catch are unknown.

Fishing opportunities are managed through an overall TAC for skates and rays by management unit. This stock straddles two such units (North Sea and Celtic Seas).

Reference points

No reference points are defined for this stock.

Basis of the assessment

Table 3 Blonde ray in Subarea 6 and Division 4.a. Basis of the assessment and advice.

ICES stock data category	5 (ICES, 2021b)
Assessment type	No assessment (ICES, 2021c)
Input data	Annual landings since 2009
Discards and bycatch	Unknown
Indicators	None
Other information	None
Working group	Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEE)

History of the advice, catch, and management

Table 4 Blonde ray in Subarea 6 and Division 4.a. History of ICES advice and species-specific estimates of landings. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Landings corresponding to advice *	Agreed TAC *		ICES landings ***
			2.a ** and 4	6.a, 6.b, 7.a–c, and 7.e–k	
2006			2737	No TAC	
2007			2190	No TAC	
2008			1643	No TAC	
2009			1643	15748	6
2010			1397	13387	10
2011			1397	11379	18
2012			1395	9915	5
2013			1256	8924	24
2014	Decrease catches by 20%	-	1256	8032	10
2015	Same advice as in 2014	-	1382	8032	14

Year	ICES advice	Landings corresponding to advice *	Agreed TAC *		ICES landings ***
			2.a ** and 4	6.a, 6.b, 7.a–c, and 7.e–k	
2016	Precautionary approach	6	1313	8032	14
2017	Same advice as 2016	6	1378	8434	7
2018	Precautionary approach	≤ 6	1654	9699	27
2019	Precautionary approach	≤ 9	1654	10184	35
2020	Precautionary approach	≤ 9	1737	10184	21
2021	Same advice as in 2020	≤ 9	1650	9675	
2022	Precautionary approach	≤ 7			
2023	Precautionary approach	≤ 7			

* Combined TAC for skates and rays.

** Since 2016, landings of blonde ray have not been allowed from EU/UK waters of Division 2.a.

*** The data were revised in 2016 (ICES, 2016), and represent the minimum estimates based on reported landings.

History of the catch and landings

The distribution of this stock does not extend into the NEAFC Regulatory Area.

Table 5 Blonde ray in Subarea 6 and Division 4.a. Catch distribution by fleet in 2020 as estimated by ICES.

Catch (2020)	Landings		Discards
	Bottom trawl 99%	Other gears 1%	
Unknown	21 tonnes		Unknown

Table 6 Blonde ray in Subarea 6 and Division 4.a. ICES estimates of landings by country (in tonnes). The data were revised in 2016 (ICES, 2016). Blank cell = no data reported; 0 = value below 0.5.

Year	Belgium	Denmark	Spain	France	UK	Ireland	Total*
2009	0		0	1	5	0	6
2010	0				7	4	10
2011					17	1	18
2012					4	1	5
2013					1	24	24
2014				1	1	9	10
2015		0		1	3	9	14
2016				1	2	11	14
2017				0	1	5	7
2018				1	3	23	27
2019				1	1	33	35
2020	0			1	0	20	21

Summary of the assessment

There is no assessment for blonde ray 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. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.5322>.

ICES. 2016. 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.

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ICES. 2021b. Advice on fishing opportunities. *In* Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2021. ICES Advice 2021, section 1.1.1. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.7720>.

ICES. 2021c. Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF). ICES Scientific Reports, 3:59. <http://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.8199>.

[Download the stock assessment data and figures.](#)

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