

Editorial

It's a mad, mad media world

It started as an article in my local newspaper yesterday here in the south west of the UK but by the end of the day it was making the BBC national radio news and, for all I know, could have been broadcast even further worldwide. It was entitled:

“FISHERMEN ‘STRIKE GOLD’ WITH ANCHOVIES”

I've included a link at the bottom so, if you want, you can read the whole article but I'll quote the first 5 paragraphs to give you a flavour of the piece.

“Fishing officials warned of an international sea battle yesterday after freak weather saw Westcountry waters attract an unprecedented number of anchovies.

The tiny fish are usually found in the balmy Mediterranean, but two Westcountry trawlers have hauled in a staggering 36 tonnes worth £72,000

in just two days.

The fishing crews, based in Brixham, Devon, have refused to comment on the haul or reveal the exact location for fear of attracting other trawlers keen to cash in.

Brixham deputy harbourmaster Dave Bartlett said the catch was like “striking gold” and trawlermen were “overjoyed”.

However, he also feared an invasion from rival fishermen in Spain and France who may descend on the area in a “gold rush-style free-for-all”. “

The remainder of the article is a classic example of irresponsible reporting and what worries me is that I suspect they don't even realise it.

Deputy Dave Bartlett is quite right to fear a Spanish and French invasion. Foreign fisherman's ears can't help but light up when they hear 36 tonnes, £72,000 and 2 days all in the same sentence. They are

like the proverbial sharks smelling a drop of blood from miles away. I say 'proverbial' because, if it were true, then wouldn't shark boats only have to take a cupful of the stuff rather than the usual putrid barrel load of mackerel guts and blood? I'm sorry. I've digressed.

Whilst Dave was still worrying about a combined Spanish and French invasion, the intrepid news reporter (not credited on the website) was making damn sure that he had every right to be; for in the next few paragraphs he not only named the two successful trawlers but also reaffirmed their port of embarkation. I could hear the inevitable revving of foreign diesel engines and just thought it was a perfect example of the media's ability to not only shoot itself in the foot but also to spoil the party for everyone else.

But just when I thought it was all over, the journalist produced his coup de resistance and managed to

get a shark reference into a marine story because, according to a 'shark fishing expert', "Thresher sharks eat anchovies so there is a high chance we will see an increase in thresher sharks in the UK".

He is then reported to have said what every media person dreams of. "All sharks are dangerous but these grow to 1000lb and 20ft."

So in a few short paragraphs this reporter has not only f'd the local fishing industry but has left the general public with the certain impression that if they so much as dip their toe into UK waters it will be taken by a 20 foot, 1000lb monster. Great. That's all we need.

But do you know what really depressed me the most was that, if they would just leave these oily little creatures alone (the fish that its), here in the southwest of the UK, we could have our very own 'sardine run'.

<http://www.thisiswesternmorningnews.co.uk/news/Fishermen-strike-gold-anchovies-swarm/article-1470846-detail/article.html>

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