

Parting Shot

The recent focus on potting for wrasse in south-west England has produced concern from conservation organisations and the public but also a reasonably rapid regulatory response from the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities.

There has been significant research in Norway and Ireland to establish impacts and it seems that depletion of wrasse numbers in localized areas will occur but knock-on effects on ecosystems are unlikely to be significant. Anglers, divers and underwater photographers especially will, however, be alarmed by reduction in numbers.

For those interested in what we know about the fishery and likely effects, there are links at the end and the Marine Conservation Society, in September 2013, also published a well-researched position paper. Do read them if you wish to comment on the fishery.

The wrasse are exported to Scotland where they are introduced into salmon cages to clean lice from the fish. BBC Scotland reports that 'about three million wrasse are needed to support the 60 million salmon produced in Scotland, but only about 600,000 come from farms. The rest are caught in creels and

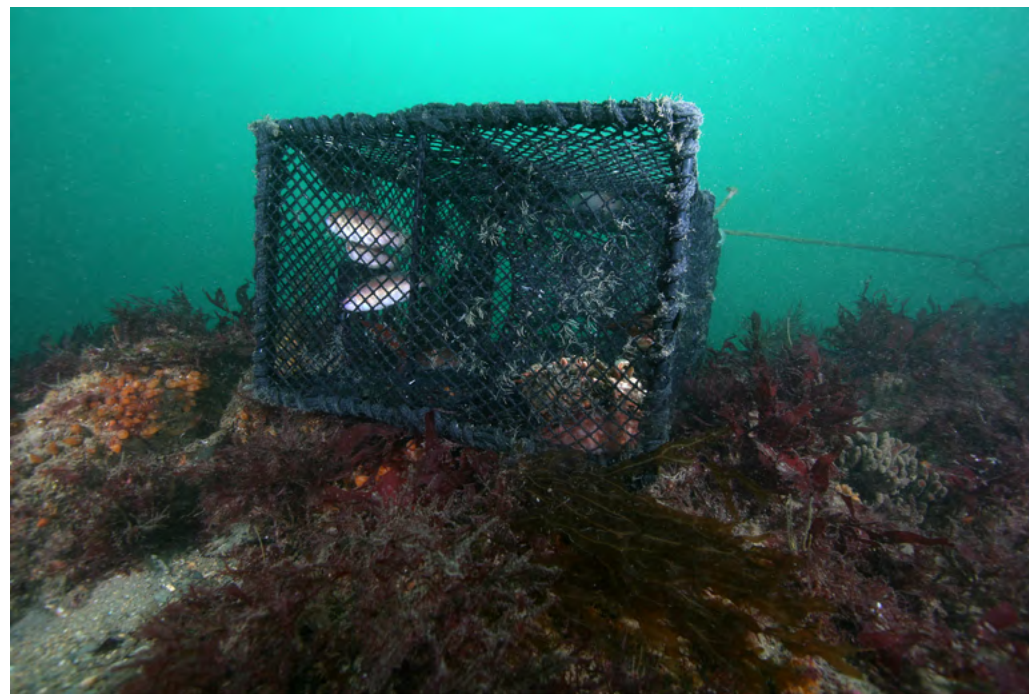
transported to fish farms.' It is the smaller wrasse (rock cook, goldsinny and smaller corkwing) that are especially targeted.

Although fishermen are collaborating with the IFCAs in collecting data from their catches, there seems little effort to study impacts of removal on the populations of wrasse or of any knock-on ecological effects by seabed surveys.

Meanwhile, voluntary 'no potting' areas have been identified in Devon and statutory areas in Dorset. However, the legal provisions for 'Reference Marine Conservation Zones' (where all extractive activities are prohibited) need resurrecting so that we have areas that are as close as possible to natural to compare with fished areas. Inshore areas important for diving and snorkelling should, in my view, be excluded from potting.

On a dive in the western part of Plymouth Sound from Peter Rowlands' boat MV Magic, I came across a string of the very characteristic wrasse pots and took some images to add to my 'Activities and impacts' collection. The image here was taken at about 14 m depth.

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Canon EOS 400D equipped with 10-22 mm lens and twin Sea&Sea YS110 flashguns. The settings were ISO 400; 1/60th second; f 6.3.

For a detailed account including of research and what we know about likely consequences:

<https://secure.toolkitfiles.co.uk/clients/15340/sitedata/Wrasse/Final-Wrasse-report-July-5th-2017.pdf>

For a summary of the approach that Devon and Severn IFCA have taken:

<https://secure.toolkitfiles.co.uk/clients/15340/sitedata/Wrasse/Guidance-for-Live-Wrasse-Fishery.pdf>

For a summary of the approach that Southern IFCA have taken:

<https://secure.toolkitfiles.co.uk/clients/25364/sitedata/files/Wrasse-Guidance.pdf>

For the view of Devon Wildlife Trust:

www.devonwildlifetrust.org/sites/default/files/wrasse_information_for_web_page_.pdf

For the Marine Conservation Society Position Paper:

http://www.mcsuk.org/downloads/fisheries/Cleaner_Fish_Position_Paper.pdf

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