

Sea Bass

Dicentrarchus labrax

Fish · Summer visitor to the estuary · May–Oct



Photo by Miguel Mendez from Malahide, Ireland, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

A handsome, streamlined predator, silver with a darker grey-green back, a white belly and two dorsal fins, the first sharply spined. Sea bass move into the Solway and the tidal Nith through the summer, hunting in surf, around structure and over sandbanks. They have become steadily more numerous in Scottish waters as sea temperatures have risen.

BEHAVIOUR

Bass hunt small fish, crabs, prawns and sandeels, often in the broken water of surf and around the turn of the tide, and will follow a flooding tide right up over sand and mud to feed. They are slow-growing and long-lived — a large bass may be twenty years old — which makes populations vulnerable to overfishing, and catch limits and minimum sizes are set accordingly.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Temperate basses (Moronidae)
SIZE	Commonly 40–70 cm · slow-growing and long-lived
UK STATUS	Native; subject to strict catch limits and minimum sizes

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