



## Welcome to the Newsletter

Gathering fisheries data is not a one-way process of interest only to IFI researchers. This issue highlights some of the ways we communicate our work back to stakeholders and the public: making reports available on our website, developing education materials about our work and providing data to inform conservation initiatives and to fulfil EU requirements. This issue also celebrates World Shark Day (14th July): read more about Ireland's shark species by clicking on the pictures on page 2 of this issue.

As always, we thank all IFI staff who contribute to our research programmes and to this newsletter.

Slán,

**Dr. Fiona Kelly, Head of Research, Policy & Risk**

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## Wanted! — Your Sightings of Lamprey Spawning

During late spring and early summer in rivers around Ireland, lamprey spawn in redds that they excavate in riverbeds, much like trout and salmon. This is a rare opportunity for people to directly observe fish behaviour for themselves, and IFI's [Habitats Directive research team](#) particularly appeals to everyone out and about on rivers to watch out for these redds to help conservation of Ireland's lamprey populations.

Every six years, EU member states issue [Article 17](#) reports on the conservation status of habitats and species listed in Annex II of the Habitats Directive, which includes all three lamprey species found in Ireland: brook lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*), river lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) and sea lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*). IFI's Habitats Directive research team contributes to these monitoring reports by collating data on the distribution of lamprey, including records of spawning activity as an additional source of information.

All species of lamprey in Ireland migrate upstream to spawn, usually in stony or gravelly areas of shallow, flowing water. Lamprey grasp stones with their sucker-like mouths and pull them up to form gravelly depressions called redds in which they spawn. Adult lamprey and their redds can be told apart based on size: river lamprey are 25–40 cm long and spawn in redds that measure less than 50 cm across in March–May, often in the same location as the much smaller brook lamprey; in contrast, sea lamprey are 50–100 cm long and spawn in redds greater than 80 cm across in May–July.



Sea-lamprey redd: light-coloured, stony depression in riverbed (circled in red)

Videos showing lamprey spawning can be watched on IFI's YouTube channel at <https://tinyurl.com/sea-lamprey-redd> and <https://tinyurl.com/river-lamprey-redd>. The Habitats Directive team would love to hear from you if you come across lamprey spawning sites. Signs to watch out for include the following:

- Light-coloured, stony areas of riverbed cleared by lamprey
- Depressions in the riverbed with upturned stones downstream
- Groups of lamprey moving stones or clustering together

### Want to report a lamprey redd?

- Please record as much information as possible:
  - Species spawning
  - Number of spawning lamprey and number of redds
  - Date & location
  - Take a photograph
- Email: [lamprey@fisheriesireland.ie](mailto:lamprey@fisheriesireland.ie)



Two river lamprey excavating a redd, with smaller brook lamprey also present



Sea lamprey in a redd



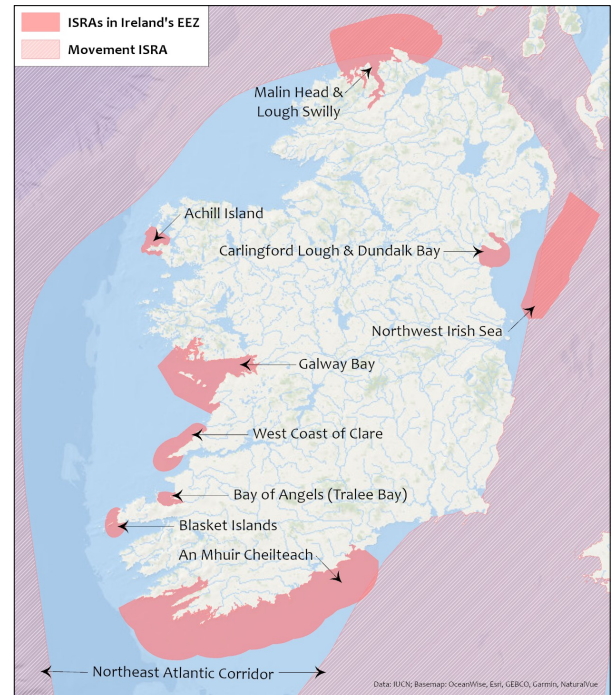
## Important Shark &amp; Ray Areas — MSTP Contributes to International Conservation Initiative



An undulate ray, one of the species present in the “Bay of Angels” ISRA

Sharks and rays are among the most threatened marine fish species. Many of these species are long-lived, with naturally low abundances, making them particularly vulnerable to the impacts of fisheries. To help an international initiative to conserve them in European marine waters, IFI’s Marine Sportfish Tagging Programme (MSTP) has contributed data on the distribution of sharks and rays that were tagged in a collaborative citizen-science programme, involving sea anglers, charter skippers and IFI.

According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), 38% of shark and ray species globally are now threatened with extinction. To address this global extinction crisis, the IUCN is identifying Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRAs), which are areas of ocean that are important habitat for the survival and well-being of one or more shark or ray species. ISRAs are not marine protected areas; rather, they are mapped areas for which best available recent data on sharks and rays present are compiled in consultation with shark experts. ISRAs are proposed in an evidence-based assessment that uses strict criteria, such as presence of vulnerable species, diversity of sharks and rays and importance for life-history and migration.



IUCN designated ISRAs in Ireland's EEZ

In the assessment for the European Atlantic region over the last year, the MSTP dataset was the most extensive that covered Irish inshore waters, highlighting how citizen science can make invaluable contributions to conservation science. Several shark and ray species tagged by the MSTP are vulnerable or under threat, including some critically endangered species, such as tope, porbeagle, angelshark and flapper/common skate.

The MSTP dataset contributed to the successful designation of six ISRAs off the coast of Ireland. It is hoped that these ISRAs will provide a foundation for marine spatial planning, environmental impact assessment, fisheries management and cross-border conservation planning that will take better account of vulnerable sharks and rays. More information about ISRAs is available at <https://sharkrayareas.org>.

## World Shark Day, 14th July: Meet some of Ireland's Sharks



Angelshark



Blue shark



Tope



Porbeagle



## For the Love of Our Waters — Introducing the FLOW Project

Supported by PEACEPLUS 2021–2027, which is a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), the FLOW project ([For the Love of Our Waters](#)) is an initiative to improve water quality in four priority cross-border catchments: Lough Melvin, Upper & Lower Lough MacNea, the Cladagh/Swanlinbar River catchment and the Kilroosky Lake Cluster.

Declining water quality associated with pressure from both wastewater discharge and agriculture is an issue in these catchments, and FLOW aims to address this by investing in wastewater treatment infrastructure and by engaging with local communities in education and action to protect rivers.

The project partners are led by the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN). Within the project, IFI's FLOW team will focus on Lough Melvin, working with local stakeholders on nature-based solutions in the catchment and monitoring the lake's unique trout populations with acoustic telemetry. The team will also engage with the angling community through citizen science to gain important insights into the ecological status of Lough Melvin and its fish community.



Top: IFI's FLOW project team at the official launch.  
Bottom: Brown trout from a tributary in the Lough Melvin catchment

## DiadSea Project — Developing Tools for Stakeholder Engagement

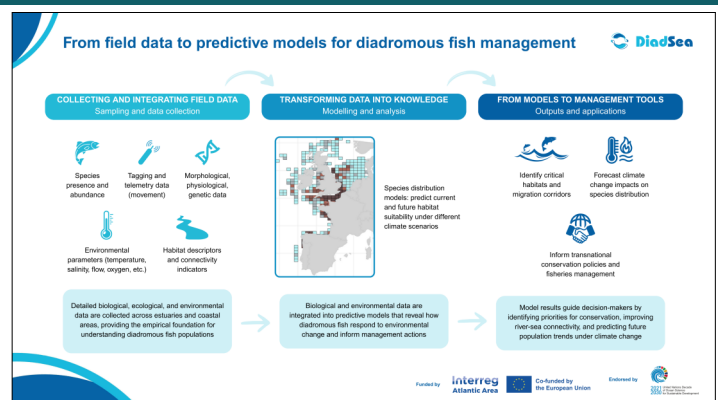
Funded by EU Interreg Atlantic Area 2021–2027, the [DiadSea](#) project aims to improve transnational cooperation in the conservation of diadromous fish in the Atlantic regions of Portugal, Spain, France and Ireland. An important activity within the project is developing tools to engage stakeholders and to educate communities about the threats faced by diadromous fish as they migrate between rivers and the sea.

To communicate scientific information about the project's work in a straightforward and visual way to the public, DiadSea project partners have created thematic infographics. The topics include how fishermen can identify diadromous fish they might catch at sea, how DiadSea researchers sample diadromous fish and how data gathered is used in predictive models for fisheries management.

Developed by DiadSea project partners Logrami, the Migr'Ocean card game for children features gameplay that challenges players to think about the pressures faced by migrating fish and possible solutions to help them. The illustrated cards help children to learn about diadromous fish in a fun, interactive way, and packs of Migr'Ocean cards have been distributed to the IFI's Something Fishy coordinators for use as a fun learning resource.

To download infographics and other resources developed by the DiadSea project, please visit:

[www.fisheriesireland.ie/research/diadsea#diadsea-resources](http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/research/diadsea#diadsea-resources)



Top: infographic on how scientific data helps fisheries management.  
Bottom: cards from the Migr'Ocean game.

## National Research Survey Programme 2024 — Fish Stock Survey Reports Published

The latest reports from IFI's National Research Survey Programme (NRSP) covering fish stock surveys in 2024 are now available online. As well as fulfilling Ireland's obligations under the Water Framework Directive (WFD), these annual reports provide a broad overview of the health of our national fish stocks for recreational angling.

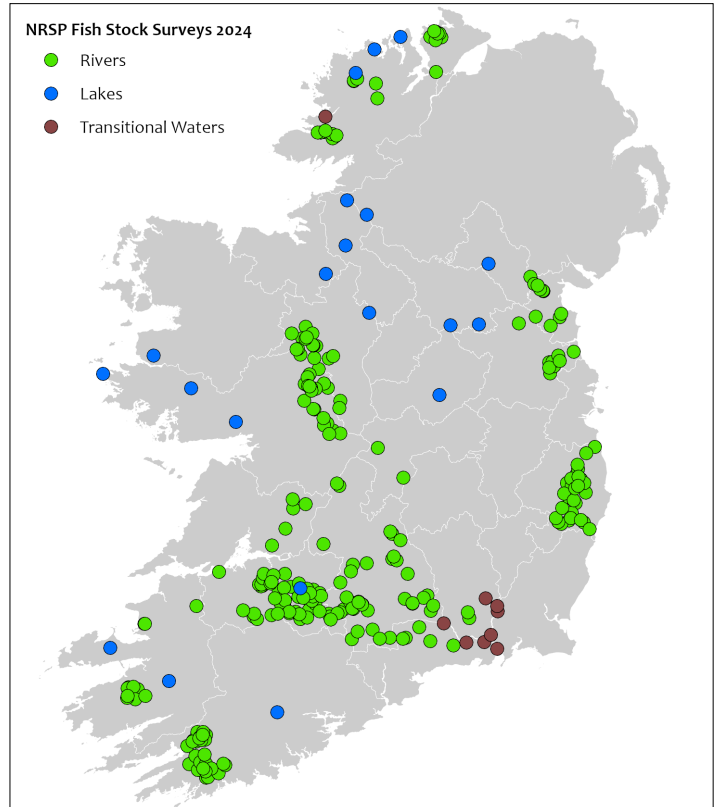
The NRSP monitors catchments across the country with repeated surveys over a multi-year cycle using standard methods to assess changes in the ecological status of fish communities at sites in rivers, lakes and transitional waters (estuaries, lagoons & tidal freshwater). Ecological quality ratings calculated for these waterbodies are reported to the EPA to fulfil WFD reporting requirements and are used to guide catchment-level decision-making for water management.

As well as WFD surveillance monitoring, the NRSP conducts "added value" surveys to gather baseline data on the state of fish stocks in catchments around the country, and the team provides their survey expertise in support of other IFI research programmes. The NRSP incorporates the [National Coarse Fish Research Programme](#) and includes rivers and lakes of particular interest for fisheries management, such as important angling lakes, monitoring of rivers affected by water quality problems, fish kills or invasive species, etc.

In 2024, the NRSP surveyed 27 lakes, 273 river sites and 9 transitional waters. Overall, 18 species and 2 hybrids were recorded in rivers and lakes, and 35 fish species were recorded in transitional waters. Although some long-term surveillance sites over the 2022–2024 cycle showed improvement in fish ecological status, there was a net deterioration overall across rivers, lakes and transitional waters compared with the previous 2019–2021 cycle.



NRSP survey of Lough Caum, Co. Kerry, in 2024



Rivers, lakes and transitional waters covered by the latest NRSP reports

The NRSP team acknowledges the IFI regional staff around the country and research staff who supported the delivery of the 2024 survey programme.

Reports on the 2024 WFD surveys, as well as open data on fish ecological status and species distribution, can be found online in the following locations:

- Lake reports: <https://tinyurl.com/wfd-lakes-2024>
- River factsheets: <https://tinyurl.com/wfd-rivers-2024>
- Summary report: <https://tinyurl.com/wfd-summary-2024>
- Fish ecological status webmap: <https://arcg.is/1i0mWG2>



Brown trout caught in survey of the River Hurley, Co. Meath, in 2024



Iascach Iníre Éireann  
Inland Fisheries Ireland

## We Hope You Enjoyed the Newsletter

Feedback is always welcome, so please get in touch if you have any comments.

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## IFI social media

