



**A GUIDE TO  
SEA ANGLING  
IN THE  
DONEGAL REGION  
by  
Norman Dunlop**



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## ***Foreword***

We are lucky in the Northern Region to be blessed with one of the most varied and beautiful coastlines in Ireland which is bathed in the effects of the warm and crystal clear North Atlantic Drift Current. The shoreline varies from golden Atlantic storm beaches, quiet estuaries and bays to deep water, kelp strewn rock marks. This all means that our waters are inhabited by numerous species of fish which afford the shore angler a broad range of opportunities. There are also many marks for the deep sea fisherman varying from sand and shingle banks through rising rocky reefs to deep water wreck fishing.

The Northern Regional Fisheries Board is responsible for the encouragement and promotion of Sea Angling and as such is

delighted to co-operate with the Central Fisheries Board and the Loughs Agency in bringing you this guide to aid both the first time and experienced angler. The fishing in the region is still to a great extent 'undiscovered' and as each year passes more information comes to light. For the adventurous angler there are a myriad of opportunities waiting. This guide will serve to inform all anglers of the better known locations and marks.

It only remains to wish you the best of luck when fishing and I feel sure that once you have fished here you will be hooked for life!

**Harry Lloyd**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Northern Regional Fisheries Board**

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Terry Jackson.

## **PLEASE NOTE**

### **Errors or Inaccuracies**

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in the guide is accurate, no responsibility will be accepted by the Fisheries Boards for any errors or inaccuracies therein.

### **Access to the Seashore**

References in this guide regarding access to the shore at various points, does not imply rights of way and anglers should ensure that, where necessary, they obtain permission from landowners in order to enter or cross private lands.

### **Respect for the Environment**

Please leave the shore as you would hope to find it. Do not leave litter and do not discard hooks, line or tackle which may be a danger to animals or humans.

### **Safety at Sea**

It should be noted that all anglers going to sea in small boats must wear life jackets at all times. Anglers under 16 years of age must also wear life jackets at all times when on board licensed charter vessels. All other anglers on board a charter vessel must have access to a life jacket.

It is the responsibility of every angler on a charter boat, to ask to see the current certification from the Dept. of Marine and to view a copy of the vessels insurance policy before setting out to sea.

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## ***Fish Species***

### **Flounder (*Platichthys flesus*)**

Eyes and colour normally on the right side, but “reversed” examples are more common amongst flounders than among other flatfishes. Conspicuous enlarged, rough, hard scales on head ridge, anterior part of lateral line and along bases of dorsal and anal fins on the eyed side. Dark brown to greenish-grey, sometimes with vague orange spots; blind side uniform opaque white. Grows to about 5 lbs. Often occurs in fresh water well above the limits of the tide. Specimen weight: 1.36kg. (3 lbs).



### **Turbot (*Scophthalmus maximus*)**

Turbot are large flatfish and are regarded as one of the major prizes of Irish sea angling and they are also highly regarded for the table. The upper side is a mottled brown with numerous bony lumps or tubercles. The body is diamond shaped. Turbot can grow to over 40lbs.



## Pollack (*Pollachius pollachius*)

Very popular sport fish. Can be taken from both boat and shore on the northern coast. Common over areas of rough ground, reefs and sunken wrecks. Easily identified from its near relation, the coalfish, by the protruding lower jaw and by the shape of the lateral line which is bent over the pectoral fin. Tail not forked. Usually brown or bronze on back and flanks. Grows to over 20 lbs. Specimen Weight, 12 lbs.



## Cod (*Gadus morhua*)

Common on most coasts and unlikely to be mistaken for any other species, even though the colour of adults varies. Caught over a wide range of seabed from reefs and wrecks to areas of shingle and sand and in many of the larger estuaries. Cod are available throughout the year, but generally “peak” fishing times are May and June (boat angling) and December and January (shore fishing). Grows to over 50 lbs. Specimen Weight, 20 lbs.



## Ling (*Molva molva*)

Long, eel-like, member of the cod family which has a large barbel under the chin and a mouth of sharp teeth. Olive or red-brown in colour, sometimes mottled. A very popular sport fish, particularly with wreck and reef anglers. Almost exclusively a boat caught fish. Grows to about 50 lbs. Specimen Weight; 11.34 kgs (25 lbs).



## Mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*)

Very common on all coasts in summer when they can be taken by both boat and shore anglers in very large numbers at times. Easily identified by dark, wavy stripes on green upper body and silver undersides. Mackerel are an important bait fish when fishing for other species.



## Wrasse (Labrus)

Large family of deep bodied, hard scaled fish. Two species are of interest to Irish anglers: the Ballan Wrasse (*Labrus bergylta*) which grows to about 10 lbs (specimen weight, 4.75 lbs) and the colourful Cuckoo Wrasse (*Labrus mixtus*) (which grows to around 2 lbs (specimen weight, 1.25 lbs). Both are very common in Irish waters particularly where there are rocky areas of weed covered reef.



## Bass (Dicentrarchus labrax)

This blue backed, silver cousin of the American striped bass is one of Ireland's most sought after sport fish. It is equally at home in the turmoil of an Atlantic surf beach or in the quietness of an estuarine backwater. Most common below a line drawn from Galway to Dublin, but localised populations exist in the northern region. A protected species by law, with a bag limit of 2 fish per angler in any 24 hour period and minimum size of 40 cms. Grows to about 20 lbs. Specimen weight 10 lbs.



## Gurnard (Triglidæ)

There are three species of Gurnard which anglers can expect from waters in the northern region. Grey Gurnard (*Eutrigla gurnardus*) which grows to about 3.5lbs; Red Gurnard (*Aspitrigla cuculus*) which grows to about 4lbs and Tub Gurnard (*Trigla lucerna*) which grows to over 12lbs. Gurnards are bottom living fish, normally found on sandy or muddy bottoms in depths of 50-150 feet.



## Conger Eel (Conger conger)

Dorsal, caudal and anal fins continuous; no pelvic fins. Dorsal begins about level with tip of pectoral. Body rather stout and muscular. Mouth large; the upper jaw the larger. Grows to over 100 lbs. Offshore, inshore and in lower reaches of large estuaries. Specimen weight: 18.14kg. (40 lbs).



## Skate (Raja)

Three species of skate have been recorded by anglers in Irish waters. They are:- White Skate (*Raja alba*) (specimen weight 120 lbs); Long Nose Skate (*Raja oxyrinchus*) (80 lbs); and Common Skate (*Raja batis*) (specimen weight suspended). In the interests of conservation, the Irish Specimen Fish Committee removed the Common Skate from its list of acceptable species in 1976. Since then, all Common Skate taken by anglers have been returned alive to the water. In recent years, fish to almost 200 lbs have again re-appeared in the northern region.



## Ray (Raja)

Popular with boat and shore anglers and often confused with skate; but those with more rounded discs and short noses are generally termed ray. Normally a summer species they are available from May to October. Four species of ray are of interest to anglers in the northern region. They are Thornback Ray (*Raja clavata*) (specimen weight 20 lbs); Blonde Ray (*Raja brachyura*) (25 lbs); Cuckoo Ray (*Raja naevus*) (4.5 lbs); Homelyn Ray (*Raja montagui*) (5 lbs).



## Shark

There are five species of shark which anglers may contact in Irish coastal waters. They are the Mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*), Thresher (*Alopias vulpinus*), Six Gilled (*Hexanchus griseus*), Porbeagle (*Lamna nasus*) and the Blue (*Prionace glauca*). Of these, only the latter two are caught with any degree of regularity in the northern region, the others being mainly accidental catches. Shark fishing is very popular during the summer months.



## Tope (Galeorhinus galeus)

Medium sized shallow water shark, fairly common on the northern coast of Ireland during summer. Greyish in colour with short, triangular pectorals and deeply notched tail fin. Very popular sport fish, particularly with inshore boat anglers. Male fish to 30 lbs are often encountered in "packs" (Lough Swilly) but much larger females are either "loners" or are found in small groups. Grows to about 80 lbs. Specimen weight, 40 lbs.







## NORTHERN REGION SEA FISH RECORDS

SPECIES	WEIGHT	ANGLER	PLACE OF CAPTURE	DATE
Bass	10 lbs 2 ozs	James Markey	Rosstown Strand	8/27/1973
Coalfish	17 lbs 6 ozs	C. McLoughlin	Killybegs	8/13/1967
Cod	27 lbs 10 ozs	Thomas Donald	Port-na-Blagh	7/31/1983
Conger	60 lbs	J. Cunningham	Donegal Bay	8/7/1982
Dab	1 lb 12 ozs	Edmund Rogers	Killybegs	8/14/1964
Dogfish, Spur	14 lbs 4 ozs	Enda O'Callaghan	Killybegs	8/2/1980
Dogfish, Lesser Spotted	3 lbs 15 ozs	Robert Smart	Bunbeg	5/27/1979
Dogfish, Greater Spotted	21lbs 4 ozs	Drew Alexander	Malin	9/13/1975
Flounder	3 lbs 3 ozs	Cara O'Boyle	Teelin Bay	9/18/1989
Garfish	2 lbs	G. Tee	Rosbeg	8/23/1969
Gurnard, Tub	9 lbs 7 ozs	Tommy Ross	Downings	7/7/1980
Gurnard, Grey	2 lbs 1 oz	John Hegarty	Sheephaven	9/23/1992
Gurnard, Red	3 lbs 0.5 oz	Garvan Mc Elhenny	Lough Swilly	9/28/1980
Haddock	7 lbs 11.5 ozs	Ally Lyons	Sheephaven	6/3/1970
Hake	12 lbs 12.5 ozs	Neil Armstrong	Tory Island	8/2/1982
John Dory	7 lbs 1 oz	Stanley Morrow	Tory Island	9/6/1970
Ling	28 lbs 4 ozs	John Mc Donagh	Killybegs	8/18/1974
Mackerel	3 lbs 5.5 ozs	T.C. Le Feuve	Moville	8/21/1966
Megrim	2 lbs 4 ozs	Gerry Bell	Tory Island	8/23/1987
Monkfish	56 lbs	Eugene Mc Gee	Hassins	7/18/1966
Mullet, Grey	7 lbs 10 ozs	Kevin Boyle	Killybegs Harbour	6/8/1972
Pollack	16 lbs 5 ozs	Ronald Davidson	Port-na-Blagh	7/5/1997
Pouting	3 lbs 9 ozs	Rudi Schosland	Donegal Bay	9/3/1982
Ray, Thornback	23 lbs	Detlef Ramm	Donegal Bay	8/7/1981
Ray, Blonde	26 lbs	R.J. Boyd	Moville	8/25/1970
Ray, Homelyn	7 lbs 7.5 ozs	John Kerr	Dunfanaghy	7/17/1976
Red Sea Bream	4 lbs 4.5 ozs	Niall Watson	Malin More	9/18/1969
Rockling, Three Bearded	.90 kilos	Brian Bergin	Glengad	11/27/1993
Shark, Blue	144 lbs	Seamus Doherty	Downings	8/28/1990
Skate, Common	134 lbs	Mary Neilan	Moville	8/22/1961
Tope	45 lbs 7 ozs	Reg Ryan	Lough Swilly	7/23/1964
Torsk	10 lbs 11 ozs	Liam Brennan	Port-na-Blagh	9/17/1995
Trigger Fish	3.67 lbs	Anthony Doherty	Killybegs	10/7/1995
Tuna, Bluefin	440 kg	Adrian Molloy	Donegal Bay	10/5/2001
Turbot	25 lbs 12 ozs	Billy Mc Auley	Tory Island	5/30/1982
Wrasse, Ballan	7 lbs 6 ozs	A.J. King	Killybegs	7/26/1964
Wrasse, Cuckoo	1 lb 14 ozs	Ken Calladine	Killybegs	5/18/1991

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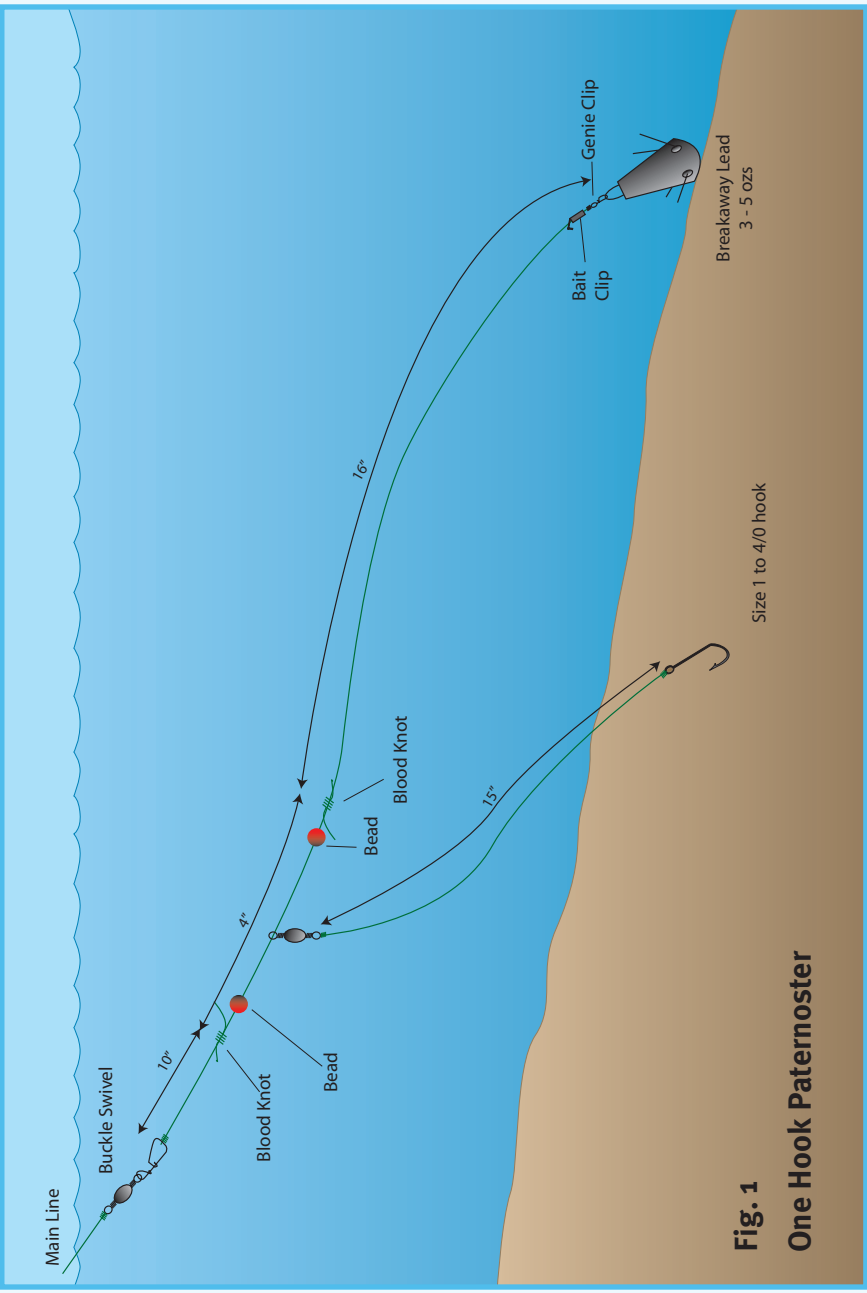
## ***Basic Terminal Tackle***

There are two basic types of terminal tackle which the sea angler will find useful in the Northern Fisheries Region. These are the paternoster and the leger. All sea fishing terminal tackle is based on these two patterns or a combination of both. It should be noted that all the 'pieces' which go to make up these rigs are available in the majority of tackle shops. Let us look, in a little more detail, at some of the terminal rig arrangements which have proven successful in the Region.

### **Shore Fishing**

In general, multi-hook rigs do not lend themselves to shore fishing in this part of Ireland as the sea bed can be very mixed and the more hooks one has on the end of the line, the greater are the chances of fouling the bottom.

When fish are feeding at distances of 100 metres or more from the shoreline, multi-hook rigs are again a disadvantage because the more hooks and bait one has on a trace, the less distance will be attained due to wind resistance.



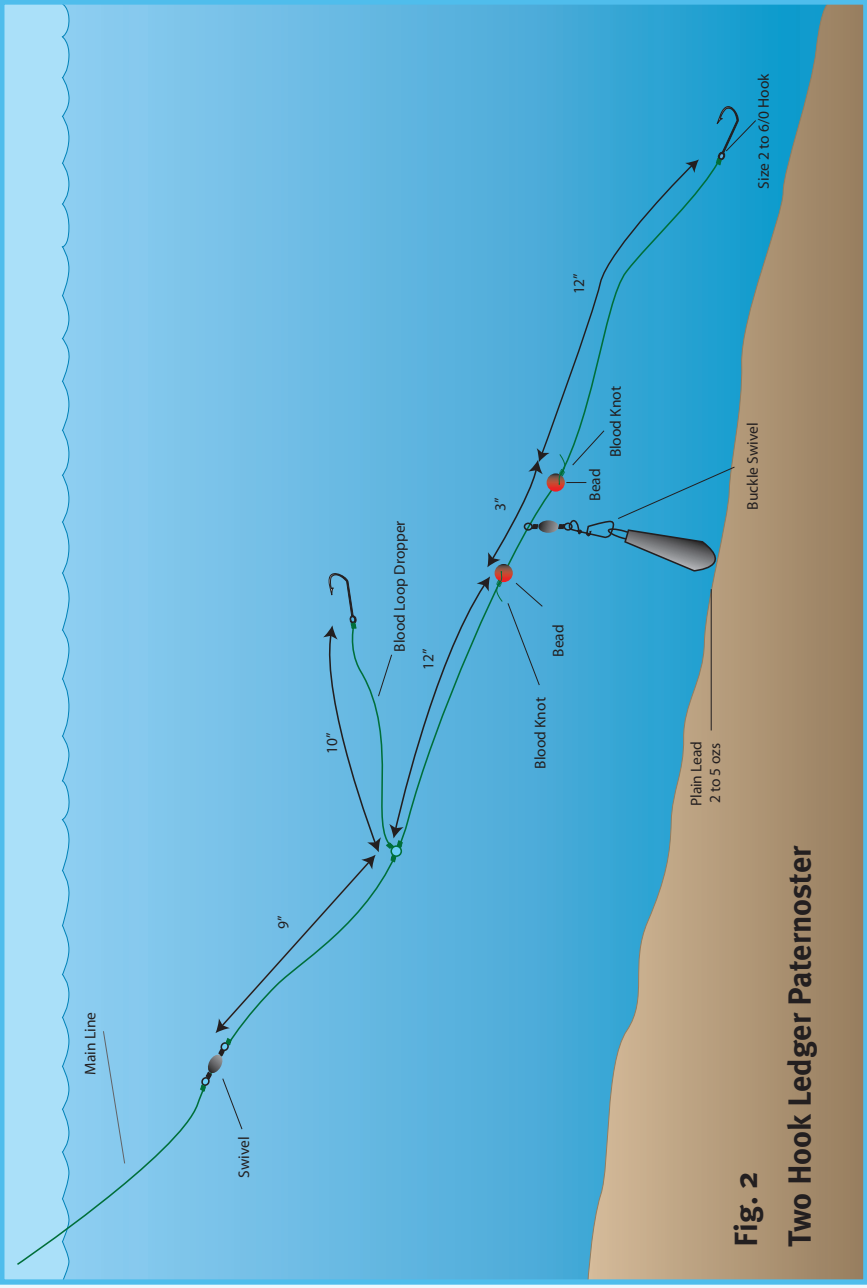
**Fig. 1**  
**One Hook Paternoster**





The **One Hook Paternoster** (fig. I) is the ideal setup for reaching fish which are feeding at long range from the shore. This is a very simple rig which sports a running dropper, between two blood knots. Small beads act as buffers against the knots to prevent the dropper swivel from moving out of its confines. At the bottom of the main trace, and immediately behind the 'Genie' lead retainer, is a bait clip. When the hook has been baited up, it is hung tightly into the clip. The bait will then be directly behind the lead, giving it a streamlined effect and lessening the possibility of soft baits flying off during the cast. When the trace hits the water, it compresses and the snood drops out of the clip, presenting a complete bait to any fish in the vicinity. The line strength and hook size are dependent on the species sought, but this type of rig is useful for codling and whiting in winter and bass in summer.

When fish are feeding close to the shoreline and distance casting is not essential, the **Two Hook Paternoster/Leger** (fig II) is recommended because it offers the angler the best of both worlds, in that, a conventional snood can be fished while legering at the same time. This system works particularly well for flatfish on open beaches and will also take ray, dogfish etc. from deep water rock marks which give access to sandy ground.



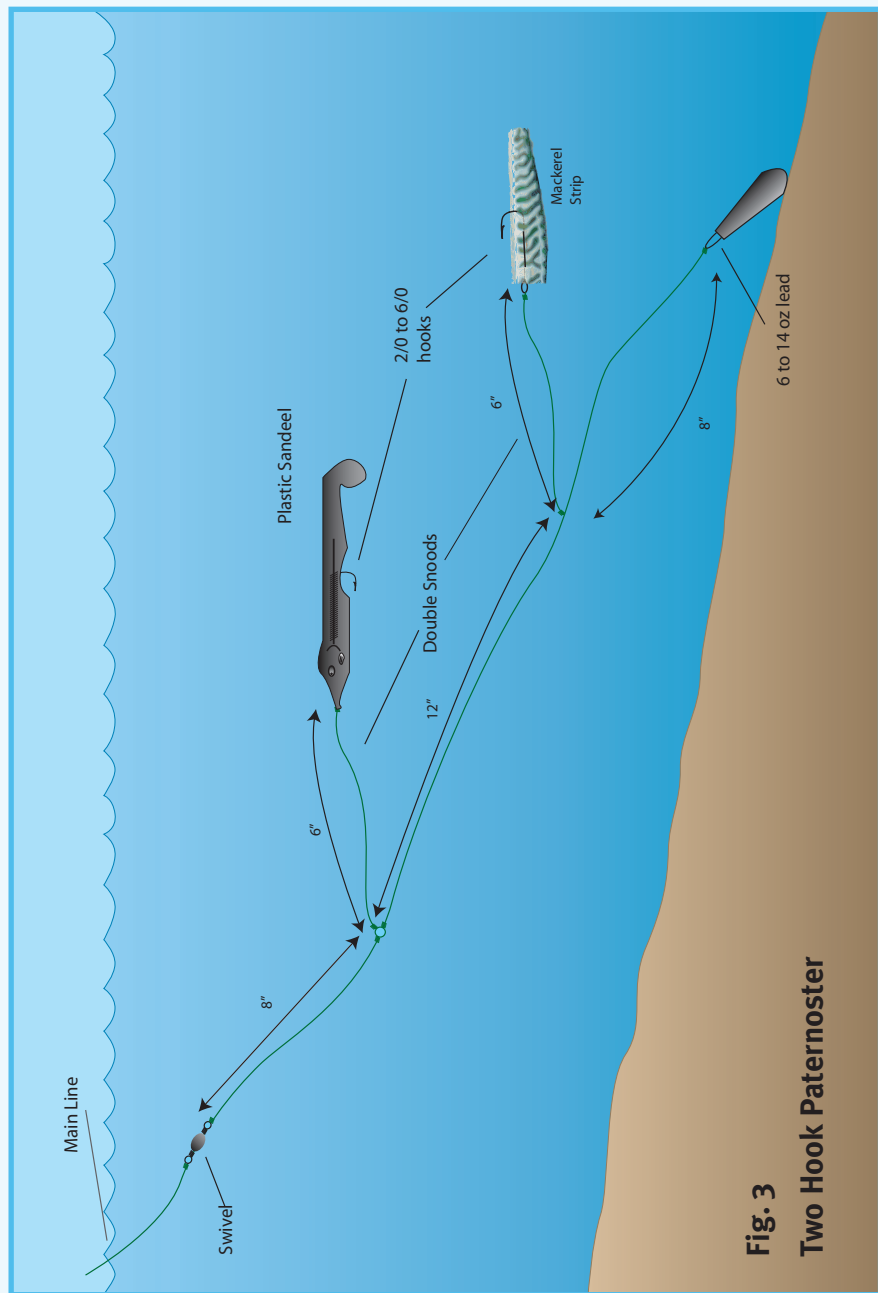
**Fig. 2**  
**Two Hook Ledger Paternoster**



## BOAT FISHING

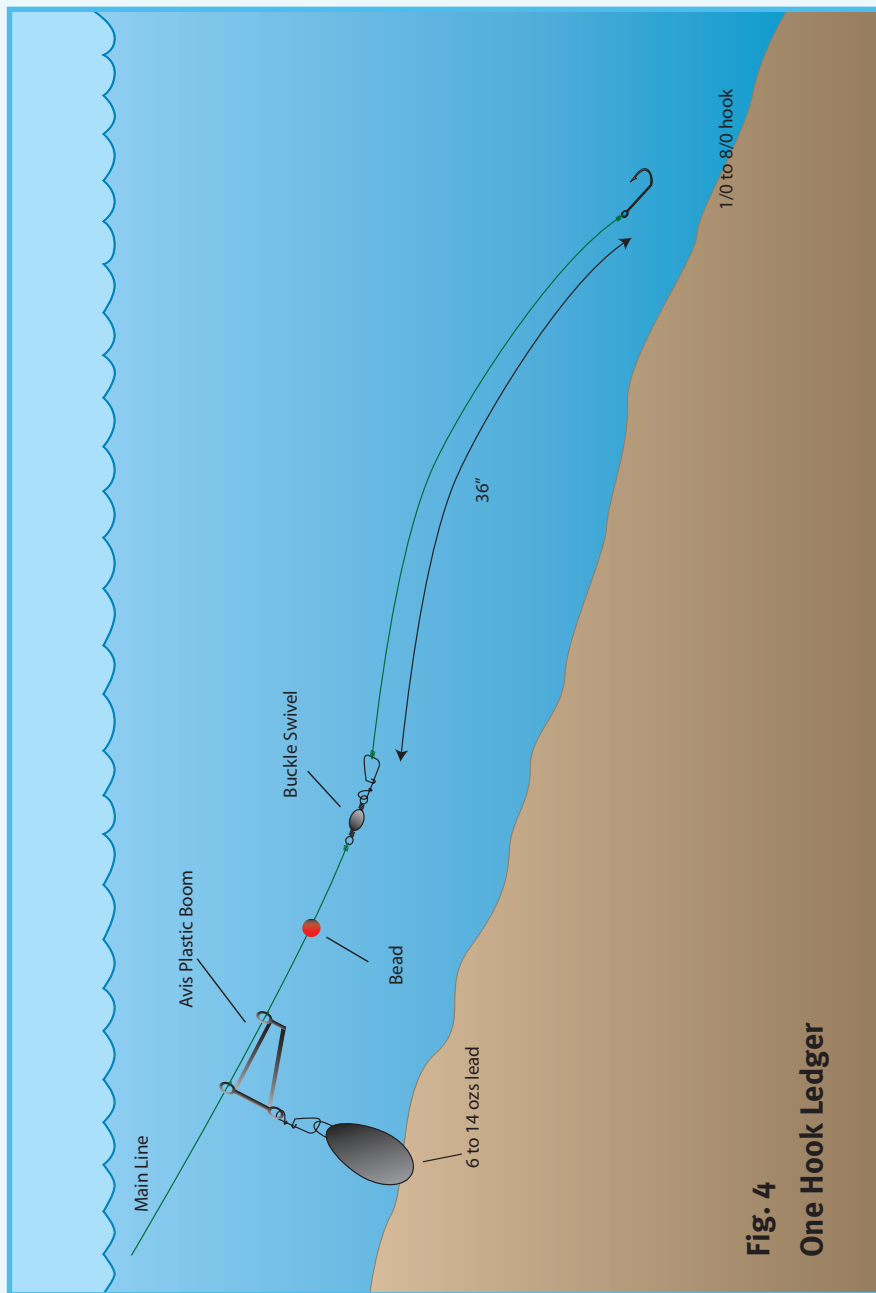
The **Boat Fishing Paternoster** (fig III) can, in theory, have any number of hooks suspended from the main line on snoods or droppers, with a lead attached below the bottom hook. The rig allows baits and lures or a combination of both to be fished at all levels from just under the surface, through mid water and all the way down to the sea bed. Another advantage which the paternoster has is that a number of baits can be worked or “jigged” together in an enticing manner without tangling with each other. It is recommended that for ease of use this rig should have no more than three droppers attached.

A second type of boat fishing terminal tackle is the **Running Leger** (fig IV) which can be fished tight to the sea bed for all the bottom living species from dabs to common skate. Again this can be a multi hook rig (three hooks, usually being the maximum). When fishing for larger species, such as tope or monkfish, one hook rigs are advisable to prevent two or more fish grabbing baits at the same time! Two large fish pulling against each other would put unnecessary strain on the terminal tackle and almost surely lead to a breakage. For some of the more “toothy” fish the trace should be made up from heavy duty nylon or multi-strand wire. The free running nature of this rig means that when a big fish picks up the bait, it can make off with it, without feeling any resistance. The angler should allow the fish to take line until it stops to turn the bait before swallowing. The strike should be delayed until the fish starts to move again.

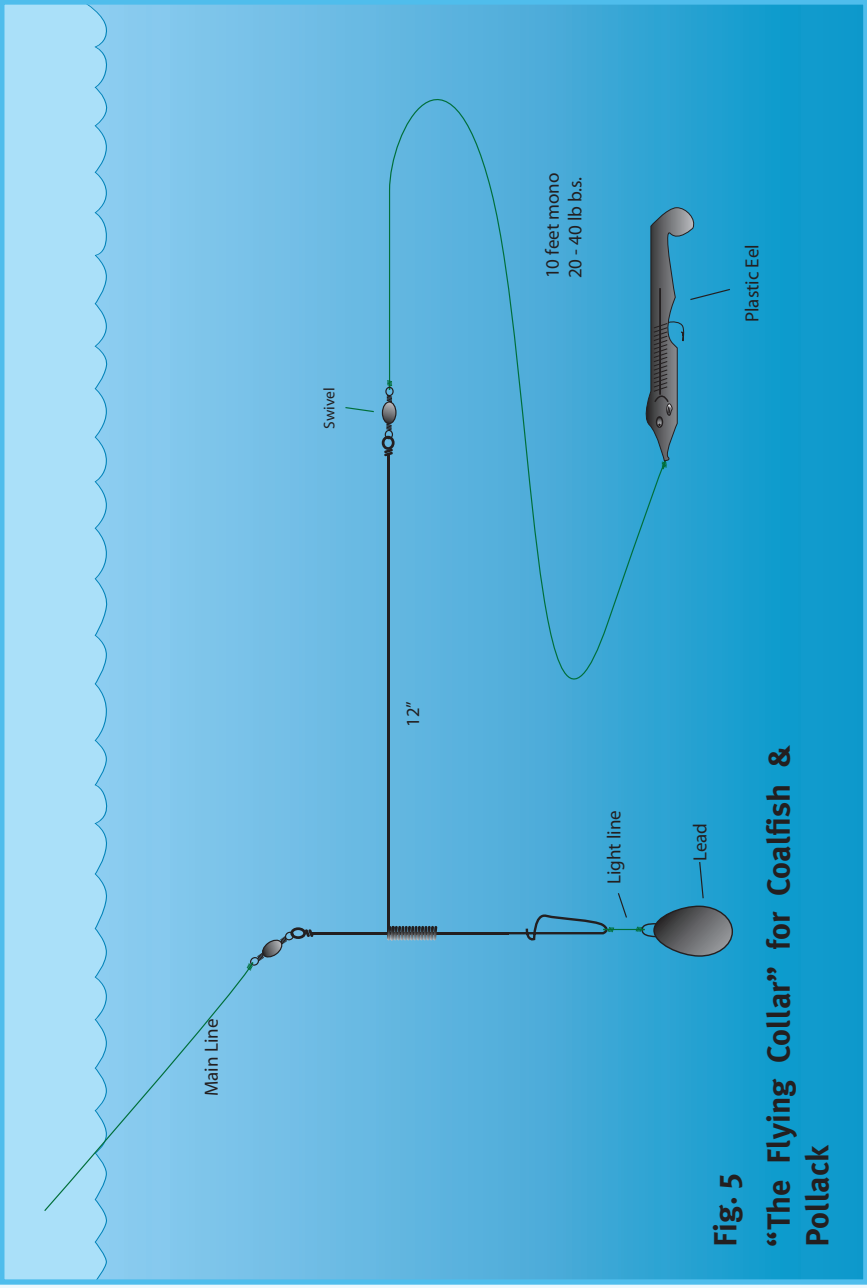


**Fig. 3**  
**Two Hook Paternoster**





**Fig. 4**  
**One Hook Ledger**

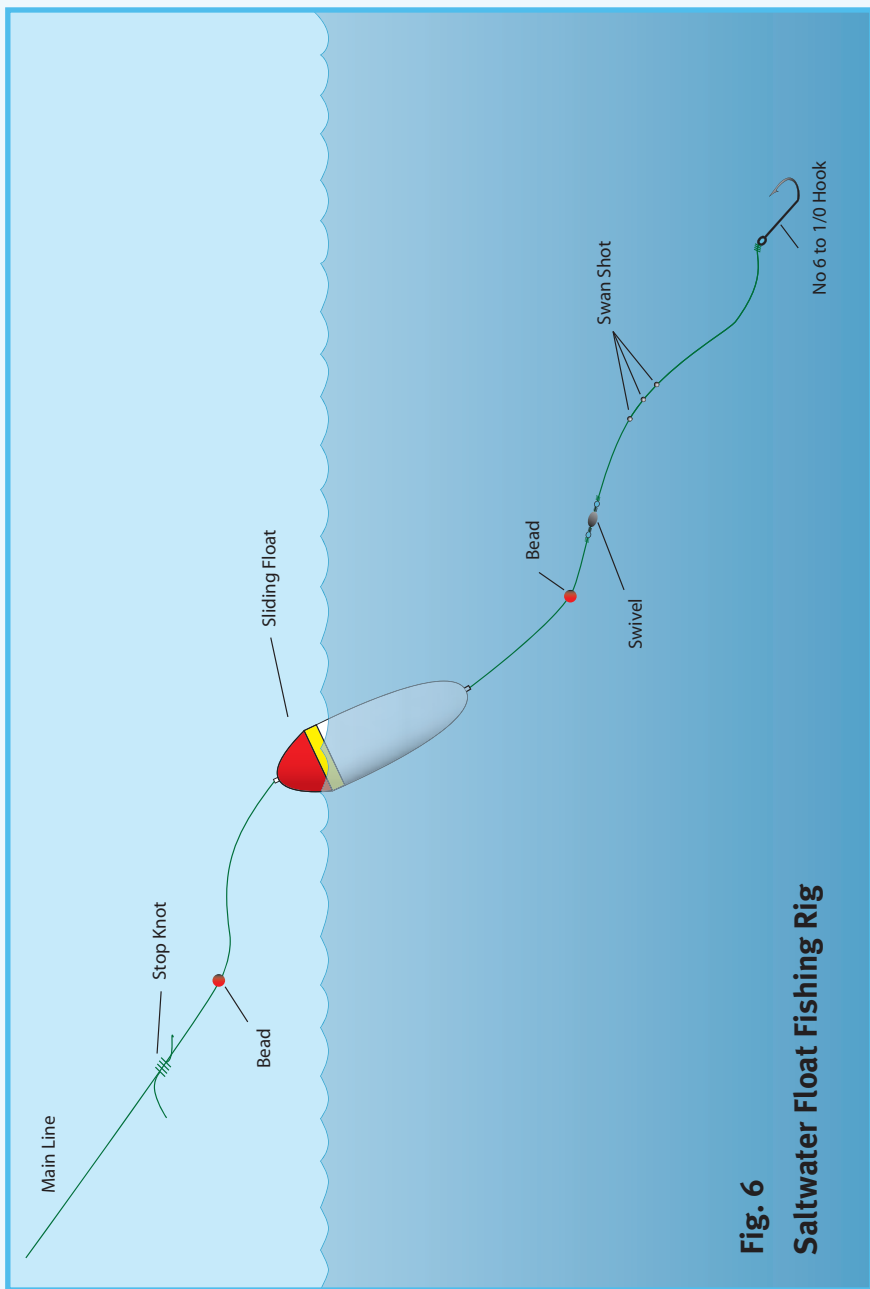


**Fig. 5**  
**"The Flying Collar" for Coalfish & Pollack**

There are many specialist boat rigs based on either of the above but one of the most successful fish catchers in the Northern area is the **“Flying Collar”** (fig V). This is basically a leger rig with a longer than usual, fixed dropper. At one time wire coat hangers were cut and shaped to create long booms, but today at least one major tackle manufacturer produces booms for this purpose. The rig which normally uses an artificial eel or shad is best employed while drifting over a deep water reef or wreck and should be lowered to the sea bed and reeled back slowly toward the boat. This process should be repeated until fish are contacted. Pollack and coalfish are the main target fish but many other species have fallen to this technique including conger, ling and cod.

### **FLOAT FISHING FROM SHORE AND BOAT**

One of the most successful methods for catching a wide range of sea fish is through the use of a **Saltwater Float Fishing Rig** (fig VI). Despite what some so called “purist” sea anglers may think, float fishing is a true sea angling method, and in many cases it is the first introduction that beginners and freshwater anglers have to fishing in the sea. It is a very effective way of shore fishing from piers, harbour walls, rocky headlands or while inshore boat fishing. Mullet, mackerel, pollack, wrasse, and garfish can all be taken this way using baits as varied as bread, worm, shellfish or fish strips. The rig can be adjusted to suit the depth being fished and the float slides between a movable stop knot and the trace which is attached to the main line by a small swivel. Beads are inserted between the knots to act as buffers. The trace is weighed down with shot, with the number used being dependent on the size of the float and bait. As a general rule of thumb, the top third of the float should be above water. Size of hook and bait are dependent on the type of fish being sought and in fact a scaled up version of this rig can also be employed from boats where larger fish such as tope or shark are the quarry!



**Fig. 6**  
**Saltwater Float Fishing Rig**



## Basic rod, Line & Reel configurations for the Northern Region

Rod	Reel and Line	Use	Target Species
2 - 3 metre graphite or kevlar spinning rod.	Freshwater type fixed spool reel loaded with 2 - 4.5kg monofilament line.	Float fishing, spinning or plug fishing from piers, harbour walls, rocks or in estuarine channels.	Sea-trout, bass, mullet, mackerel, coalfish, pollack and garfish.
2.5 - 2.8 metre graphite fly rod rated 8 to 10 weight.	Saltwater fly reel loaded with fly line suitable for saltwater use.	Fly fishing from rocks, piers and in estuaries.	Sea-trout, bass, garfish, mackerel and pollack.
3.3 - 3.7 metre graphite bass rod with a casting weight of 80 - 112 grams.	Small multiplying reel or medium fixed spool reel loaded with 5.5 - 8 kg monofilament line.	Bait fishing on surf beaches, in estuaries or from rocks.	Bass, sea-trout, flounder dab, wrasse, and pollack.
3.7 - 4 metre graphite beach rod with a casting weight of 140 - 170 grm.	Small to medium multiplying reel or medium to large fixed spool reel loaded with 7.8 -12 kg monofilament line and having a shock leader of 18 - 25 kg mono.	Rock, pier, estuary or beach fishing where distance casting is necessary.	Ray, dogfish, huss, cod and tope.
1.80 - 2.20 metre graphite boat rod of line class 2.7 kg - 4.5 kg.	Small multiplying reel loaded with 2.5 - 4.5 kg monofilament or braided line.	Boat fishing in shallow to moderately deep water.	Plaice, dabs, gurnard wrasse, rockling, and whiting.
1.80 - 2.20 metre graphite boat rod of line class 4.5 kg - 6.8 kg.	Small to medium multiplying reel loaded with 4.5 - 6.5 kg monofilament or braided line.	Boat fishing over offshore reefs, sand banks and wrecks.	Pollack, coalfish, cod, haddock, ray, turbot, and ling.
1.80 - 2.20 metre graphite boat rod of line class 9.0 kg - 13.6 kg.	Medium to large (up to 4/0 size) multiplying reel loaded with 9 -13 kg monofilament or braided line.	Boat fishing in deeper water and over deep wrecks and reefs.	Blue and porbeagle shark, skate, tope, conger, and ling.
2.20 -2.80 metre graphite up tide boat rod to cast 80 - 225 grams.	Medium multiplying reel loaded with 6.8 - 8 kg monofilament line and having a shock leader of 18 - 25 kg.	Boat fishing in shallow water, where casting baits away from the boat yields best results.	Ray, tope, huss, bass, and dogfish.



## Saltwater Baits, for use in the Northern Region.

### LUGWORM

The presence of **lugworm** (*Arenicola marina*) is recognised by the spaghetti-like spiral of sand which they leave on the foreshore at low tide. They are abundant in estuaries and on many sheltered beaches throughout the area and trench digging for an hour or so with a garden fork will usually produce enough worms for a days fishing. In

the Northern Region lugworm have traditionally been a shore angler's bait, normally associated with fishing for flounder, wrasse, and dabs but they are also very effective in attracting codling and whiting while inshore boat fishing. Lugworm can be kept alive for a few days, wrapped in newspaper and placed in a cool box.



### RAGWORM



**Red and king ragworm** (*Nereis pelagica* and *Nereis virens*) are absent from most of the Northern Region, but are a proven fish catcher in the area and an excellent bait for flatfish, whiting, pouting, codling and dogfish. Anglers wishing to use ragworm, must be prepared to carry a supply with them. Ragworm will stay alive for over a week if kept in

a cool-box, on a tray of coral sand, and moistened regularly with fresh sea water.

**Harbour ragworm or "maddies"** (*Nereis diversicolour*) are very common in muddy reaches of most estuaries. These small ragworm are a good stand-by

bait, when used in bunches, for float-fishing for mullet and wrasse or when legering for flatfish. Harbour ragworm are difficult to keep alive for more than a few days.

**White ragworm or “herring-bone rag”** (*Nephtys hombergi*)

are also fairly common, frequenting many lugworm beds and being particularly effective when used in conjunction with other baits such as lugworm or mackerel strip. White ragworm will stay alive for up to a week if kept in similar conditions to red ragworm.

It should be noted, however, that white ragworm will not survive if put into the same tray as the more aggressive reds.



**Large white ragworm or “silvers”** (*Nephtys caeca*) are rare and localised in their distribution throughout the entire country. They are, however, the single most sought after bait by shore match anglers who tend to jealously guard the location of “silver” beds. Large white ragworm are often the only bait that will attract fish in bright conditions and many shore competitions have been won by the angler with a good supply of them. They are normally found in clean coarse sand in the vicinity of the low spring tide line, particularly where masonry worms (which have little use as bait) are located. Large whites can be kept for quite long periods, in trays of moist coral sand, but should never be mixed with other ragworm species.

## CRAB



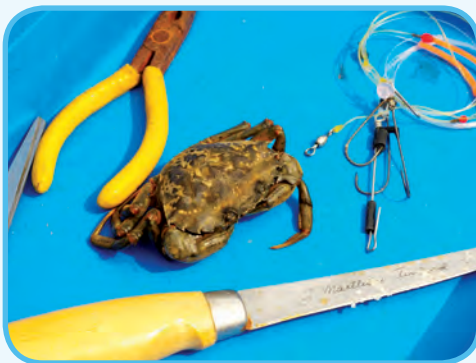
Up until fairly recently, crab was seldom used in the region, with the possible exception of rock marks like St. John’s Point, where small hard backed crabs have traditionally been used to catch wrasse. The upward trend in shore angling has meant that the effective use of crab has spread from the south and east coasts where it has been a popular bait for years.



The **Common Shore or green crab** (*Carcinus maenus*) moults at least once a year, usually prior to mating. This generally takes place in May or June, although moulting crabs can be found as late as October in some parts of the south and south-west coasts. Crabs can be collected along sheltered shores, particularly where there is an abundance of serrated wrack (*Fucus serratus*) which provides good cover for them. Not all shore crabs are suitable as baits and only “peelers” or “softies” are used.

A “peeler crab” is one which is in the process of shedding its shell and is generally regarded as the prime crab bait. To tell a “peeler” from an ordinary hard-backed crab, one should twist the last segment off one of the legs. If the segment comes away and there is white flesh underneath, the crab is unsuitable and can be returned to its hiding place. If, however, the segment comes away easily, revealing the newly formed, soft red flesh underneath, the carapace and under shell can be peeled off for use as bait.

Crabs which have already shed their shells but have not yet hardened (a process which takes about a week) are known as “softies”. They are rubbery to the touch and cannot nip as the claws are too soft to do any damage. In most conditions a soft crab will be almost as effective as a “peeler” although the scent may not be as strong. In order to ensure that crab baits are properly presented on the hook they should be tied on with elasticated thread.



Crab can be used in almost any sea angling situation from the estuary and beach where they are excellent for most species through inshore boat fishing for ray, dogfish and flatfish to deep sea fishing for cod.

**Hermit Crab** (*Eupagurus bernhardus*) can be collected in a pre baited drop net in rock pools or below pier walls. Hermit is good bait for cod, ray, and flatfish from boats, but is virtually impossible to cast from the shore due to the soft nature of the tail section. As with all crab baits, hermit crab should be tied to the hook with elastic thread.

Other species of crab such as the **velvet swimming crab** (*Portunus puber*) also make excellent baits but they are seldom encountered in moulting condition.

## SQUID AND CUTTLEFISH

The **common squid** (*Loligo forbesi*) and **common cuttlefish** (*Sepia officinalis*) are superb baits for a wide range of species. In the past they were rarely seen on fishmonger's slabs as they were not a popular food item here, but in the new millennium there has been a considerable increase in the migrant workforce and as a result many, previously uncommon, foodstuffs, including squid, are now widely available.

Squid will also fall occasionally to baited lures, while boat fishing and should be frozen while still fresh. They are well suited to being transported in a cool box where they will remain frozen as long as the ice blocks are renewed regularly.

Most tackle shops now carry the smaller “**calamari squid**” possibly (*Loligo vulgaris*) which can be purchased, frozen, in handy 454g cartons of ten. These are valuable bait for various species of ray as well as dogfish, cod and conger.

## SHELLFISH

Shellfish are very valuable bait, particularly when fishing for specific species, especially fish with a soft or small mouth e.g.; haddock, sole or dab.

**Cockle** (*Cardium edule*) live buried just under the surface of damp sand and can be gathered, on many parts of the Donegal coastline. They are very useful for shore angling and inshore boat fishing and plaice, dab, flounder, whiting and all the wrasse family will take cockle freely. Cockle is also productive when used in a “cocktail” with other baits such as lugworm or squid. Cod and whiting find this combination particularly attractive.

The **Common whelk or buckie** (*Buccinum undatum*) is the largest of the whelk family and the thick flesh is a tough bait for cod, whiting, pouting, coalfish, wrasse and dogfish. Common whelks are a deeper water shellfish than their cousins the periwinkles, living mainly among the stones and mud of the lower shore. As with hermit crab, a pre-baited drop net hung for a few hours at high tide from the end of a pier wall will usually yield ample whelk for a days fishing.

The **Common Gaper** (*Mya arenari*) which is oval shaped and dark grey to black in colour is found in muddy creeks and estuaries. They can be detected at low tide, by searching for a key-hole shaped depression in the mud. The hole is created by the long siphon with which the gaper filters small food particles out of the water. Gapers can be dug up with a wide tined garden fork and when the siphon is removed, it provides a very good boat angling bait for a number of species. Used in combination with lugworm or ragworm, it is also a useful shore angler's bait for bass and flatfish.



Most other species of clam are found in deep water and do not come into the anglers range until a gale throws them up onto the shore. The **Iceland cyprine clam, or “geegan” (*Arctica islandica*)** for instance is a large, round, blue-black flanked shellfish which, over the years, has accounted for numerous specimen bass on the North Derry and Antrim beaches. Despite the fact that “geegan” occur rarely on the foreshore they deserve a mention here because they may also be thrown up from time to time on some of the Donegal beaches, heralding an influx of fish, feeding on them.

The **Common Mussel (*Mytilus edulis*)** can be found on most sheltered rocky shores, particularly in the vicinity of a fresh water outflow, where they can be gathered with ease. Once mussels have been removed from their shells, the soft flesh should be removed then tied to the hook with elasticated thread. This provides excellent bait for shore and boat fishing where codling, coalfish, plaice and dabs are expected.

When mussels are not required for immediate use, they should be taken from their shells and within a few hours, frozen down, in “ziplok” bags containing batches of twenty or so. This allows for ease of storage and future transport in a cool box. Frozen mussel is an excellent stand-by for winter fishing when other baits are difficult to obtain.

Another excellent boat and shore bait is **Razorfish (*Ensis siliqua*)** which are fairly common in the Northern Region, but requiring a little more effort to collect than mussel.

Razors are narrow shellfish which grow to about 17cms in length and live in damp sand near the low water line. They are difficult to dig because they can be up to a metre below the surface and the slightest movement on the sand in their vicinity sends them spurting to the bottom of their hole. The best method for capturing them is to take a carton of salt onto the beach, treading carefully onto the razor beds. Once a razor burrow has been located, some salt should be poured into the hole. In an effort to expel the salt, the shellfish speeds back to the surface, where dexterity and nimbleness are then called for to grab the razor and place safely in a bucket. This can be a very hit and miss exercise but an hour or so will yield twenty or thirty shellfish. Razor is tough bait which is attractive to many summer species but is particularly effective for autumn bass and winter cod.

## FISH BAITS

All forms of oily fish are useful in virtually every sea angling situation, but are particularly effective when seeking the larger predators such as shark, tope, monkfish, skate and tuna.



Probably the most important of all sea angling baits is the **Mackerel** (*Scomber, scombrus*) which can be used for almost every species of fish from both boat and shore. It can be used in “strip” form for turbot, megrim, pollack, coalfish and gurnard. In “last” form (the tough tail section) for ray, bull huss, spurdog, and ling, while whole mackerel can

be used for sharks, skates and conger. Mackerel can be bought in most fish shops, in season, or can be caught while spinning from harbour walls or rocky outcrops. A string of brightly coloured feathers or lures can also be employed while boat fishing to take mackerel in numbers. Freshly caught, mackerel, will out fish most frozen fish baits but it is always worth stashing away a few fillets in the freezer for the leaner days of winter, when fish bait is scarce.

Most oily fish deteriorate quickly, particularly in warm weather, and should therefore, be frozen within a few hours of capture,

Mackerel can also be frozen whole, but the innards should be removed and stomach cavity cleaned out with salt water, before doing so.

**Herring** (*Clupea harengus*) are seldom caught on rod and line but are important bait for many species of fish. Herring can be bought fresh in most fishmongers and supermarkets and have the advantage that they survive freezing better than mackerel and do not deteriorate as swiftly when thawed. Herring works well in combination with other baits, particularly red ragworm.

The **Lesser sand-eel** (*Ammodytes tobiannus*) which grows to about 15 cms and the **Greater sand-eel or launce** (*Ammodytes lanceolatus*) which can grow to over 30 cms are very important bait fish.

Lesser sand-eel are common along sandy shores at Erne Estuary, Portnoo and Downings Bay, where they are excellent bait for sea-trout, pollack, and dogfish and occasional bass. They can be collected by the Cornish method known as “vingelling” in the wet sand with a blunt bread knife or bill hook. The blade should be pulled in a sweep through the top 15cms of sand and



when a sand-eel is located, it will wriggle out to the surface where speed is essential to grab it before it can escape under the sand again. The greater sand-eel is seldom seen on the shore line being a deeper water fish. They can however be taken on small Sabiki type lures while boat fishing and are prime bait for turbot, ray, tope and cod. Sand-eel will stay alive for several hours in a large bucket of cool, aerated sea water.

## SIGNPOSTING



The majority of fishing locations and bait gathering areas are signposted throughout the region.





# MAP 1

## LOUGH FOYLE to LOUGH SWILLY



## ***Lough Foyle to Lough Swilly, Map 1.***

The almost land locked Lough Foyle creates a natural boundary between Co. Derry in Northern Ireland and Donegal in the Republic. The lakes and rivers which form the Foyle catchment fall under the jurisdiction of the Loughs Agency which is a cross border, Government body with a remit to “provide effective management, development, conservation, and promotion of fisheries and marine tourism in Loughs Foyle and Carlingford”.

Below the R238 coast road, north of Muff, in the vicinity of **Quigley's Point (A)** there are patches of lugworm, which can be dug fairly easily, on the foreshore at low tide. Some small harbour ragworm can also be dug in the same area while crab can be found in the weed margins during summer. Spinning from the **Old Pilot Pier (1)** produces mackerel at high water during the summer. Distance casting will yield flounder, dab, dogfish and occasional ray, while ground-baiting beside the jetty will attract mullet. There is an old slipway at the pier which can be used to launch or retrieve small boats two hours either side of high water.

Boats can also be launched at **Moville (2)** where mackerel and mullet can also be caught from the pier, mainly on float fishing tackle. Bottom fishing yields conger, and fish over the specimen weight of 18kg have been recorded. **Greencastle (3)** is a busy commercial fishing port and is also the landing stage for a cross Lough ferry. Pier fishing yields conger to bottom fished baits, particularly at night, while float fishing produces a wide range of species including, wrasse, immature coalfish, mackerel and mullet in summer. There is a slipway in the harbour where small boats can be launched on most stages of the tide.

Inside the narrows between Greencastle and Magilligan Point, the Lough is comparatively shallow with depths seldom exceeding 18 metres at low tide. The main shipping channel hugs the Donegal shoreline and is buoyed for almost its entire length up to the city of Derry.

There is some boat fishing west of McKinney's Bank on the slope running from 10 metres at the Saltpans Buoy down to 18 metres opposite Moville. Bottom fishing over a mixture of sand, shingle and mud will yield dogfish, ray, flounder, dab and occasional plaice. In summer, mackerel shoals enter the Lough and during these periods tope will occasionally be found there. Fishing is usually carried out from an anchored boat, but caution should be exercised at all times as shipping has right of way in the buoyed channel.





To the north east of Greencastle, the rocks below the lighthouse on **Dunagree Point (4)** provide sport with pollack, coalfish and mackerel in season on spinning and float fishing tackle. Wrasse can also be taken while bottom or float fishing with crab or ragworm baits. Care should be exercised here at all times particularly in wet conditions as the rocks can become very slippery.

At **Kinnogue Bay (5)** rock fishing at the eastern and western ends of the bay yields coalfish, pollack and wrasse, while fishing on the beach, below the car park, produces flounder, dab, plaice and occasional turbot, bass, and seatrout.

Shore fishing at **Tremore Bay (6)** is similar to Kinnogue, but rock fishing is confined to the western end of the bay, for pollack, coalfish and wrasse. When the surf is up, beach fishing can be productive over the sandy patches for flounder, dab, plaice, and occasional bass and seatrout.

Fishing from the beach at **Culdaff (7)** is best during late summer and early autumn for flounder, dogfish, dab, turbot, and occasional bass and seatrout. Catches of twenty flatfish on a tide are not uncommon, and the baits which bring best results are sandeel, mackerel strip and lugworm. Conger to almost 20kg have been caught from Bunagee Pier at the western side of Culdaff Bay, while the rocks to the north of the pier yield mackerel in season, pollack, coalfish and occasional codling. Small boats can be launched from the slipway beside the pier for fishing the inshore waters between Glengad Head and



Dunmore Head where red gurnard to over specimen size of .90kg., plaice, ray, turbot, john dory, codling and whiting have been recorded and up to twenty species can be expected in a day. The slipway is viable for launch and retrieval on all stages of the tide with the exception of extreme low tide on springs. Another notable feature of the area is the first class tope fishing which is available from mid June to mid September. In recent years catches of up to 30 fish a day have been recorded with the best fish weighing almost 23 kg.

There is a charter boat operation based at the pier which specialises in fishing the numerous offshore wrecks in the Northern Approaches. This is where German U boats operated during the two world wars, against the trans Atlantic convoys which carried food, troops and equipment for the Allied war effort. Literally hundreds of vessels were torpedoed and sunk off this coastline and many of the wrecks lie in very deep water and have never seen a rod and line. Some of those closer to port, within a twenty five mile radius, are the first world war wreck 'Athenia', a 9,000 ton cargo liner which lies in 60 metres, the second world war, 11,000 ton freighter 'Cumberland' lying in 55 metres, and the massive 35,000 ton liner 'Justicia' lying in 70 metres. Many specimen fish have been taken from these wrecks including ling to over 11kg, coalfish to over 7kg and pollack to over 6kg. Each year in late August and early September, porbeagle shark to over 45kg have also been hooked in the vicinity of these wrecks.



Before it enters the sea at the western end of the beach the **Culdaff River (B)** forms a small estuary behind the sand dunes. Lugworm are found on the banks of the channel and where the river crosses the beach, sandeel can be dug in the wet sand.

Spinning and float fishing from several rocky vantage points at **Glengad Head (8)** will yield pollack, mackerel, wrasse and coalfish. Bottom fished baits will attract conger, dogfish and rockling.

**Malin Head (9)** is the most northerly point in Ireland, and is also the location of a radio weather station often mentioned in North Atlantic sea area forecasts. As the R242 road winds its way around the headland it affords spectacular views of the sea, sometimes several hundred feet below. Much of the Head is inaccessible to anglers but the pier on the north eastern side affords access to deep water at high tide with spinning, float fishing and bottom fishing all possible. Coalfish, pollack, wrasse, conger, dogfish and dab are all normally available and mackerel can be caught, particularly on evening tides, in summer. There are also several rocky outcrops which can be accessed on the northern side of the Head, but these should only be approached in dry settled weather and never in northerly winds, which can push dangerous waves onto the shore. Fishing in the area produces pollack to over 3.5kg, and ballan wrasse to over 2.25kg. Other possible species are coalfish, conger and dogfish.

To the south of Malin Head lies the quaintly named and picturesque **Five Fingers Strand (10)** which is a shallow beach of golden sand and very popular in summer with picnickers and swimmers. In sunny settled weather, it is impossible to fish there during daylight but come evening, and the last of the day-trippers have departed, the quietness returns. Sandeel, mackerel strip, lugworm or white ragworm will all take fish on a flooding tide, particularly at dusk. Sea trout, turbot and flounder are available in most sea conditions, but when surf is running, bass also become a distinct possibility. After dark, larger baits cast well out will attract dogfish, huss and even an occasional ray is possible. As the R242 road swings back east from the beach towards Malin village it runs along the Northern Shore of **Trawbrega Bay (C)** where lugworm casts will be found on the banks of the estuary channel. Trench digging is most productive just to the south of the road bridge at Malin, where worms are plentiful but the foreshore is very muddy.

From the town of Carndonagh the R238 runs north west parallel to the southern shore of Trawbrega Bay and as it bears south, about 3kms before Ballyliffin, a small road runs north to **Doagh Island (11)** which affords easy access to the southern side of the main channel leading to Trawbrega Bay. From the channel banks, on a flooding tide, free lined sandeel or spinning with plugs, will yield sea trout in summer and occasional bass in autumn. Bottom fishing at high tide with crab or worm baits will produce freshwater eels, flounder and dogfish.

On the western side of Doagh Island is **Pollan Bay (12)** which, like many of the beaches in the area is shallow, crystal clear and offers limited angling possibilities during daylight. A flood tide in the evening, however, offers good opportunities for flounder, dab, turbot, seatrout and occasional bass. Sandeel, mackerel strip and white ragworm are the best baits.

To the south west of Pollan Bay is an area of rocky shoreline at **Binnion (13)**. This gives access to some 7 metres of water at mid tide. Much of the ground close to the rock is very rough and tackle losses are almost inevitable, but casts of over 90 metres will find sand in three or four places along the stretch. These sandy tracts can be easily spotted from the shore when wearing polarised sunglasses. Spinning will account for pollack and mackerel in summer, while float and bottom fishing close to the rock should yield coalfish and wrasse. Casting out over sand should also throw up dab, ray, and dogfish.

By turning north onto a narrow road from the R238 in Clonmany a 3km journey leads to **Tullagh Strand (14)** which has in the past produced silver eels, whiting, flounder and dab for shore anglers, particularly at night. It should also be possible to catch seatrout and occasional bass there when moderate



surf is running. Crab can be collected along the weedy eastern shore of **Tullagh Point (D)** while lugworm can be dug on the eastern end of the bay.

Looking out from the rocky promontory of **Dunaff Head (15)** the lighthouse on Fanad Head to the west, can be viewed across the mouth of Lough Swilly while to the south the inner waters sweep away for some 40 kilometres inland towards the town of Letterkenny in the south. The southern side of the Head is the safest place to fish from and there are several rock perches there, where ballan and corkwing wrasse are plentiful on float or bottom fished crab. Pollack and mackerel can also be taken during high tides in summer on shads or Redgill type lures. Conger, too are also a possibility on large bottom fished baits. To the south of Dunaff Head the next major outcrop is **Lenan Head (16)** where there is some excellent spinning for pollack and mackerel from the northern shore in summer. Float fishing over very foul ground will also yield wrasse and coalfish. There is an even wider range of species available from the pier and rocks on the southern side. Float fishing close to the pier will produce coalfish, wrasse, pollack and launce while casting out over sand in some 10 to 12 metres of water throws up ray, dogfish, codling, plaice and dab. The last three hours of a flood tide being the best period.

To the south of the fortifications (relics of the Napoleonic Wars and more recently an army base) at **Dunree Head (17)** there are several vantage points where wrasse, pollack, coalfish, dogfish and occasional conger can be caught. Fishing is at its peak here from July to September.

Below Dunree on the beach at **Stragill (E)** lugworm are plentiful, when trench digging, though they are somewhat small. Larger worms can be found nearer the low tide line but they are burrowed deep in the sand and can only be taken successfully by single digging, which is time consuming and not very productive.

From the old pier at **Buncrana (18)** Float fishing will usually provide sport for mackerel in summer. Casting out over sandy ground will produce ray, dogfish, whiting and dabs. Sea trout will also occasionally fall to spinners. The best fishing period is about two hours either side of high water. When heavy rain falls locally however, leading to an excess of freshwater running into the upper reaches of the Lough from the Rivers Swilly, Mile Water and Crana then marine species seem to move away from the shore with only sea trout apparently unaffected.

Similarly fishing at **Fahan (19)** is diminished by freshwater run off and the best period there is invariably after long spells of fairly dry weather. Fishing is best when the tide is making up the channel on the first two hours of the flood when ray, dogfish and flounder can be expected.

# MAP 2

## NORTH WEST DONEGAL

### SHORE ANGLING







## ***North West Donegal, Map 2.***

Lough Swilly has been synonymous with quality tope fishing, almost since organised sea angling in Ireland, began. In the seventies and eighties, however, there was a marked decline in catches and anglers were blamed, as it was then the practise to kill virtually every tope caught to satisfy the requirements for a “weigh-in” at tournaments. As a result literally hundreds of dead tope would end up on the pier at the end of these events. Thankfully things have changed since then and all tope taken are now returned alive to the sea, many of them carrying a bright yellow Fisheries Board tag.

Tope normally appear in late May or early June and remain in the Lough or its environs until September. The vast majority of tope in Lough Swilly are male “pack” fish which seldom grow to over 18kg. Male fish over this weight are rarities in the North Atlantic, so any tope heavier than this are almost certainly female. Fish to over 20kg are however taken occasionally, early in the season or around the time the pack fish start to disappear in late September.

Tope are one of our more “toothy” sports fish so baits are best presented on a running ledger of approximately 13 kg multi-strand wire or heavy (circa 55kg) monofilament attached at the business end to a sharp 8/o hook. Fresh, medium sized mackerel baits are the favoured tope attractors, and they should be cut in flapper style (the whole fish with tail and backbone removed) or fillet (cut length-wise keeping half the head and tail). Tope can be taken from either a drifting or anchored boat in the Lough and the use of a “rubby dubby” bag of fish oil and entrails held together with bran in an onion bag, is usually an irresistible attraction for these predatory fish. To work properly the bag should be hung over the side of the boat, and fixed so that it just touches the surface of the water. The natural wave motion will then dip the bag in and out of the water creating an oily slick (biodegradable of course) which should arouse the tope’s interest and bring it to the bait.

Tope are not the only fish available to boat anglers in Lough Swilly. The ray fishing is outstanding at times with thornback ray over 5.0kg and homelyn (spotted) ray to 2.0kg regularly taken. There is also good fishing for plaice and dabs in Ballymaddock Bay where drifting ragworm baited spoons downtide of the boat brings best returns. Small boats can be launched safely from the slipway in **Rathmullan (1)** and the adjacent car park can accommodate up to ten trailers.

Ray can also be caught by shore anglers fishing on slack tides, at night, from the pier at Rathmullan where ten fish in a session, to a single rod has been achieved. Occasionally a tope will also be hooked, but they are extremely



difficult to bring ashore as it involves guiding them along the sides of the pier, keeping them away from the piles and metalwork, and negotiating them up onto the slipway on the northern side. Charter boats operate regularly from the pier mainly from May to September, or by special arrangement outside this period. Up to twenty species including cod, haddock, whiting, wrasse, dab and dogfish are regularly taken aboard boats fishing in water of depths from 25 to 40 metres. The entrance to Lough Swilly is bounded on the east by Dunaff Head and to the west by Fanad Head. All the gurnard family are present in the outer area with specimen greys to .80kg, reds to 1.40kg and tubs over 2.0kg turning up regularly to boat anglers. Lough Swilly is also well known as the starting point for vessels seeking offshore wrecks but it is one particular wreck which lies just 4km off Fanad Head for which the area is best known.

In 1917 the White Star Lines', 15,000 ton liner "Laurentic" was sunk by mines laid at the mouth of the Lough by German submarine U80 resulting in the loss of some 350 lives.

Between 2001 and 2003, underwater photographers Leigh Bishop and Antonello Paone, took numerous pictures which showed that the still recognisable bow section, had broken away from the largely collapsed main body of the wreck. The "Laurentic" lies in about 35 metres of water, and over the years, has provided easily accessible and consistently good fishing for



ling, conger, pollack, coalfish, pouting and wrasse. Despite its tragic history, there are many charter skippers who would just love to have a “Laurentic” on their doorstep.

Mackerel can be caught, in season, on spinning gear, from **Portsalon Pier (2)** while bottom fishing will result in dabs, plaice, flounder, dogfish and occasional ray. The pier is tidal and there is virtually no water there at low tide, so fishing is generally best in the hours around high water. As at Rathmullan, night fishing is most productive.

The rocky outcrops around **Fanad Head (3)** provide popular vantage points for ornithologists. Here guillemots, razorbills, puffins, skuas and eider ducks can all be seen and rarer birds turn up regularly, on passage. The same rocks also provide several platforms for shore anglers, and depths of up to 13 metres are within easy casting range. Spinning over very foul ground from the finger of rock to the north of the lighthouse yields pollack, coalfish, and mackerel during summer. From the rocks to the south, spinning accounts for similar species with the addition of an occasional seatrout. Fishing close to the rock produces wrasse to 2.0kg and small coalfish, while distance casting over sand in Pincher Bay takes dabs, codling, dogfish and occasional ray.



The bays at **Glashagh (4)** and **Ballyhieran (5)** seldom see a rod and line but can produce excellent sport for the angler who visits at the right time. Glashagh is a steep-to beach made up of sand and shingle with water up to 7 metres deep, close at hand. Ballyhieran has a less steep gradient but contains fewer stones and rock in the middle of the beach. Both beaches however, have high rocks on their eastern ends and are cleaner and show most sand to the west. Shore fishing in autumn is best at both venues (particularly after a northern gale) for codling, flounder, dab, coalfish and seatrout. Bass also occur occasionally in surf conditions.

The upper reaches of Mulroy Bay are a bait gatherers paradise. Lugworm, small white ragworm, and clam are plentiful on the mudflats to the north of the caravan park on the eastern shore, and below the R246 road at **Carrowkeel (A)** and on the western side, just north of R245 road in **Carrigart (B)** lugworm can be dug in the estuary and some crab uncovered in the weedy margins. There is a sheltered anchorage and slipway in **Fanny's Bay (6)** which is reached by taking the second turn to the right off the R248 Carrigart /Downings Road and driving down to the car park at the boat yard. Small boats can be launched there for fishing in Mulroy Bay where there are several deep holes in the main channel with depths over 20 metres in places. Ray, dogfish and occasional tope can be taken, particularly when the boat is at anchor on a flooding tide. A whole range of species can be targeted at the mouth of the Lough between Ballyhoorisky Point and Melmore Head where Hoi Koi type lures baited with mackerel strip and worm or similarly baited ledger rigs work exceptionally well. In a typical days fishing, boat anglers can expect coalfish, pollack, wrasse, gurnards, dabs, dogfish, whiting and codling.

At **Melmore Head (7)** spinning from the rock ledges on the western side of the point will produce pollack, coalfish and mackerel in season. There is also exceptional wrasse fishing from the Head with fish over 2.25kg reported. Great care should be taken on these rocks, particularly after gales which cause large sea swells and occasional rogue waves. In calm conditions, however, the long walk from the car park can be very worthwhile.

About halfway round the Atlantic Drive on Rosguill Peninsula, and several hundred feet below the narrow road is **Tra na Rossan Bay (8)** which is possibly one of the most spectacular, shore angling locations in Ireland. When viewed from above, even on a dull day, the water in the bay appears to be almost crystal clear and of an aquamarine hue. This is backed by a half moon beach of pure, golden sand.

From rock platforms on both the northern and southern shores the bay affords bottom fishing into deep water. The southern side tends to be better but the long hike down the steep fern covered hillside, loaded down with fishing

tackle, and not forgetting the energy sapping climb up again, deters all but the keenest (and fittest) of anglers. The Bay fishes best on a flooding tide in summer for ray, dab, dogfish and gurnard on bottom baits, while spinning accounts for seatrout, mackerel, pollack and launce. The beach which has a large car park behind it, can be accessed by road from Atlantic Drive, and is best fished at night when huge shoals of immature coalfish are usually present. Dabs and flounder are also common, while occasional ray and dogfish can be taken by distance casting.

Wrasse, pollack, mackerel, dogfish and occasional conger can be expected from the rock marks at **Dooley (9)** and **Pollmore (10)** but the ground is very patchy at both locations and tackle losses are almost certain.

**Derrycassin (11)** is a popular mark with local anglers, on a summers evening. Mackerel are the main quarry but pollack, coalfish, launce and even an occasional seatrout can be taken on spinning tackle. Bottom fishing is also possible, but distance casting is required to put baits out over sand where dab, plaice, dogfish and ray are possible.

The village of **Downings (12)** with its vast expanse of sandy shore is popular with all sorts of holiday makers including campers and visitors towing caravans. Several large sites are within walking distance of the beach and there is a wealth of good hotel and guesthouse accommodation in the vicinity. Shore anglers will find that the pier is quite productive for a number of species during the summer. Casting out and fishing over sand, should yield dogfish, flounder, dab, and occasional plaice. Fishing close to the pier wall at night should produce conger to bottom baits while float-fished mid water baits will attract mullet, coalfish and small wrasse. Spinning from the pier head, particularly in July and August, will be rewarded with mackerel, launce and occasional garfish. There is a fine slipway at the quay from which small boats can be launched to fish on Sheephaven Bay where plaice, dabs, dogfish, ray, whiting and codling can all be expected.

There are several charter boats based at the quay and virtually every species known to inhabit Irish waters has been caught at some time or other aboard them. The largest fish ever landed at Downings was a bluefin tuna of 230kgs but some of the other specimen fish captures included common skate to 68kg, blue shark to 65kg, pollack to 6.12kg, spurdog to 5.60kg, torsk to 4.80kg, tub gurnard to 4.30kg, ballan wrasse to 2.38kg, lesser spotted dogfish to 1.53kg, red gurnard to 1.09kg, grey gurnard to .87kg, cuckoo wrasse to .75kg and dab to .72kg.

The vast majority of offshore wrecks have never been fished and they hold great potential for the local charter fleet. One species which has been targeted recently by skipper's who feel that there is specimen or even record possi-







bilities, is the porbeagle shark which has been found around a number of these wrecks.

It is almost certain that records will fall at Downings in the future, further enhancing the good reputation which the area already enjoys.

On **Trabeg Beach (C)** large black lugworm can be dug at low tide. Single digging between the blow hole and cast is the most efficient way of taking worms there. Sandeel and razor-fish are also possible on spring tide lows.

On the eastern bank of the Lackagh River Estuary at **Creevagh (D)** lugworm can be dug and peeler crab gathered around the base of the rocks. To the west of the estuary the Lackagh River joins the Duntally River and where the channel passes **Doe Castle (13)** spinning or free lining sandeel from the rocks will produce seatrout. Bottom fishing with crab baits will yield flounder while ground baiting will draw in mullet to float fished bread or sweet corn baits. Two hours either side of low water is the optimum period.

On the eastern shore of the Fayemore River estuary, mullet, seatrout, and flounder can be taken from a small quay in the **Ards Forest Park (14)**. Again ground baiting is necessary to hold mullet in the vicinity and two hours either side of low water is the most productive time.

The popular seaside village of **Port-na-blagh (15)** offers some pier fishing at high water for mackerel in season, small coalfish, wrasse and pollack. From the rocks to the north of the Carrownamaddy Estuary pollack and wrasse are also available at high tide. There is a tidal slipway in the harbour but the approach to it is difficult due to the sharp angle of entry and very narrow nature of the access road from the N56.

In most summer seasons one or occasionally two charter boats operate from the pier. Fishing is carried out over the same grounds for exactly the same species as the Downings vessels.

West of Port-na-blagh on the N56 road lies the village of **Dunfanaghy (16)**. To the north east of the town, and running almost parallel to the main road, is a long stretch of beach backed by sand dunes. In summer the beach is very popular with swimmers and sun worshippers, leaving very few opportunities for fishing, except at night. In autumn, however seatrout, flounder and occasional bass have been caught, particularly after easterly winds have pushed up the surf. The hotspot is at the western end of the beach where the river channel meets the sea. To the north of the village are a number of accessible rock marks on the eastern side of Horn Head where ballan wrasse of over 2kg and pollack to 3kg have been recorded. Conger and coalfish have also been taken there in depths of up to 17 metres. This area is notoriously dangerous in wet or windy weather and local advice should always be sought before attempting to fish anywhere on Horn Head. **Dunfanaghy Estuary (E)** adjacent to the village provides excellent bait digging for lugworm and small white ragworm with trench digging being the preferred method.

West of Horn Head is the north west facing **Tramore Strand (17)** which is best fished in spring or autumn. Surf fishing produces flounder, seatrout, dab, codling, coalfish, and occasional bass. Sandeel, lugworm and white ragworm are the best baits there. In summer ray can also be found, at night, during calm spells, but baits will generally have to be cast over 100 metres to find fish.

At the western end of the beach is **Doros Point (18)** which is a bit of a misnomer because, in fact there are two points. Fishing is carried out from the eastern platform and spinning from the rock produces mackerel in season, pollack, coalfish and occasional seatrout. Baits cast out over sand can also yield dab, flounder, codling, dogfish and occasional ray. Mackerel strip and sandeel baits account for virtually every species there. Night tides are generally best.

The long north facing **Ballyness Strand (19)** is always worth a visit at any time of year when the surf is up. Flounder, dabs, seatrout, and coalfish can all be taken in suitable conditions with the added bonus of a possible bass in autumn. Where the River Ray cuts through the beach to enter the sea at the

eastern end is the favoured location. Behind the beach lies the vast estuary of **Ballyness Harbour (F)** where lugworm are plentiful on the banks of the main channel. On spring tide lows, razor fish can also be dug or teased up to the surface by the 'salt in the burrow' method. The area around Ards Point is particularly productive.

Where the N56 swings south away from the coast below Gortahork it is met by the R257 which runs north-west around the southern shore of Ballyness Harbour. The road meets the sea at **Maheroarty (20)** where a charter boat operates from the "new pier". This is the best setting off point for fishing the prolific grounds around Tory Island where anglers can expect quality fishing for a wide range of species. There is also a good chance of tangling with some of our more unusual fish because this area has in the past turned up hake to over 5.5kg, John Dory over 3kg, megrim to over 1kg and turbot to over 11.5kg!

There is a slipway beside the pier where small boats can be launched for fishing off Inishbofin Bay in 20 to 30 metres of water for gurnard, whiting, haddock, dabs, ray and dogfish.

The coastline between Maheroarty and Bloody Foreland is very broken and offers little sea angling prospect, although small boat anglers may be able to launch at Curran's Port. Local advice should be sought, however, as there are dangerous rocks in the area which break in high swells. Great care should therefore be taken even on apparently calm days.







# MAP 3

## WEST DONEGAL

### SHORE ANGLING

	= Slipway
	= Charter Vessel
	= Town
	= Sandy Shore
	= Rocky Shore





## ***Bloody Foreland to Ardara, Map 3.***

Off the R257 road between **Buninver Point and Glashagh Point (1)** are several rock platforms, which offer rough ground fishing for pollack, mackerel, coalfish and wrasse. This area is best fished in autumn during calm spells.

In the **Derrybeg Estuary (A)** lugworm and white ragworm are plentiful, and can be collected by trench digging along the channel banks at low tide. The main access road is found by turning west off the R257 below Derrybeg village.

**Maghera Point (2)** north of Bunbeg, offers spinning and freelining sandeel in the main Gweedore River channel for seatrout. Bottom fishing using lugworm or crab baits produces flounder and freshwater eels. The last hour of the ebb and first two hours of a flooding tide is the optimum period. At the northern end of the bay, below the golf links is a small pier and slipway which affords good launching for small boats, except on low tides on springs. Inshore boat fishing in the area especially in the “Gola Roads” between Gola Island and Inishinny Island, is for dogfish, dabs, and flounder over sand with pollack, ling, coalfish, and cod over rough ground to the west of Gola.

**Bunbeg (3)** has witnessed a major modernisation in recent years and the slipway is now viable for the entire tide. Small boat fishing in depths of around 15 metres over sandy ground is excellent outside the harbour in Inishfree Bay, where ray, dabs, plaice and dogfish can be expected.

In water up to 45 metres deep, to the north of Owey Island are haddock, whiting, gurnard and cod. Dark coloured feather lures, such as “Black Widows” baited with mackerel or lugworm work well there. Tope are very numerous in this area at times and depending on your viewpoint can be so plentiful that they provide a memorable fishing experience or they destroy a good days sport.

Shore fishing in Bunbeg Harbour produces conger to over 13kg, at night from the quay wall while float fishing yields mullet, small pollack, coalfish and wrasse at high water. South west of Bunbeg on the R259 road is the village of **Kincaslough (4)**. A sheltered harbour lies 1.5km from the village and spinning from the quay wall accounts for mackerel, pollack and coalfish. Casting out over sandy ground produces flounder, dabs, and occasional codling. Inside the harbour, float fishing can be very good for mullet, although small coalfish, locally called “glassaun”, can be a nuisance at times. Bottom fishing close to the pier can be very rewarding for conger and fish over 9kg are not uncommon particularly on night tides. To the west of Kincaslough village a road runs west along the shore of Cruit (pronounced Crutch) Strand before turning northwest onto Cruit Island. At **Cruit Lower (5)** in the tide race between the mainland



and Inishillintry Island, bottom fishing from shallow rocks over sand affords excellent opportunities for tope, ray and dogfish on sandeel and mackerel baits. These predatory species move up the channel, behind a flooding tide which fills out into Cruit Strand to the south. The first two hours of the flood sees concentrations of fish moving through and this is the time to be on station. Fish will also be taken when the tide starts pushing out of the bay after high water although fishing time is restricted to about one hour only. Flounder and plaice will also be taken on worm baits at high water. There are several large, flat rock platforms on **Cruit Point (6)** directly opposite Owey Island. Here the water is over 16 metres deep but care should be taken when a swell is running as the rocks can become awash very easily. In calm weather, however, spinning can be excellent for pollack to 3kg and coalfish to 2kg. The sink and draw method, where the lure is cast out and allowed to sink, then retrieved in short bursts, works best, using the heavier versions of well known lures such as koster, toby or krill. Bottom fishing produces conger, rockling, wrasse and dogfish, but tackle losses are almost unavoidable due to the extremely rough nature of the ground.

South west of Cruit Island on **Keadew Strand (B)** black lugworm are plentiful. Clams can also be dug on the channel banks.





**Portacurry (7)** is a small north west facing sand and shingle beach which can be productive for flounder, dabs, small turbot, plaice, and dogfish. During calm spells, ray can also be taken especially on baits cast well out.

The commercial fishing harbour at **Burtonport (8)** is sheltered behind a veritable maze of islands, the most notable of which is Aranmore Island. Navigation in and out of the harbour is difficult for the inexperienced, although a pathway through the maze is marked by white pillars on many of the rocks and small islands. There are excellent facilities for the small boat angler in Burtonport, while the boat fishing off Aranmore in depths from 30 to 60 metres yields a wide range of fish including blue shark to 36kg, spurdog to 5kg, pollack and cod to 4.5kg, haddock to 2.5kg, and john dory to 2kg. All the gurnard family are also present as are whiting, pouting, ling and conger. A fast modern, charter vessel is available from the main quay but generally has to be booked well in advance.

Shore angling from the quay produces conger at night, while float fishing in daylight should yield mullet.

The town of **Dunglow (9)** famed in song and verse, sits at the head of a wide west facing bay which is sheltered at the mouth by Inishfree Island. There are two tackle shops in town and although they tend to specialise in freshwater



equipment, much of this can be adapted for saltwater use. From the pier, mullet can be caught at high water. Pre baiting is necessary, to keep the shoals around the pier, otherwise they tend to spread out over the mudflats in search of food as the tide rises.

By taking the road along the southern shore of the bay, out of Dungloe for some 5 kilometres, one arrives at Maghery Strand. At the northern end of the beach is a large rocky promontory called **Termon (10)**. Spinning from there, accounts for mackerel, pollack and occasional seatrout. Float fishing close to the rock produces wrasse, while casting out over the sand will result in flounders and dabs.

South of Termon the coastline swings around the high ground of Crohy Head and into the vast expanse of **Gweebarra Bay** which holds some of the finest inshore boat fishing in Co. Donegal. A wide variety of fish is available there to small boat anglers including tope, ray, turbot, cod, whiting, plaice, dabs and dogfish. The north and south eastern corners of the bay are comparatively shallow and drain two large estuaries. To the north, **Trawenagh Bay (C)** is an exceptionally good bait gathering area, and as the tide recedes, acres of lugworm beds are exposed. The lugworm on the channel banks are large and black. Clam and white ragworm are also quite numerous. Towards the lower reaches of the bay, around Trawenagh Point, sandeel can be dug in numbers, from the sand during the summer.

At the south eastern entrance to Trawenagh lies **Dooley Point (11)**. Spinning in the channel produces mackerel and seatrout on a flooding tide. Bottom fished baits will turn up flounder which, although not very big can be very numerous.

The southern estuary is formed by the Gweebarra River as it winds its way to sea. There are several locations on the channel banks where seatrout can be caught while spinning or freelining sandeel. **Illanfad (12)** is one of the most favoured angling stations in the estuary where as well as seatrout, freshwater eels and flounder can be taken.

Lugworm are plentiful on **White Strand (D)** and sandeel can be dug on the channel at nearby O'Boyle's Island.

The villages of Naran and **Portnoo (13)** are very popular holiday locations lying 3km off the R261 road. Portnoo possesses a neat little harbour and slipway where boats can be launched to explore the angling on Gweebarra Bay. To the west of the harbour is a large basalt rock which has sand running all the way into its base in 7 metres of water. Dogfish, plaice, dabs, flounder, turbot and ray can all be caught on bottom fished baits while spinning accounts for mackerel, launce, and pollack. Float fishing close to the rock produces wrasse and small coalfish. Two hours either side of high water is the best period. In

summer this is a popular angling location and those keen to fish there would need to arise early!

South west of Portnoo lies **Dawros Head (14)**, where excellent rock fishing is available. The rocky ground appears to be almost unbroken for most of the way around the Head, and the hotspot is just inside the south western corner where several deep kelp gullies are within easy casting range. The bottom there is very rough and tackle losses can be heavy, particularly in summer when the kelp is at its thickest. Perseverance will be well rewarded, on bottom fished baits, with good bags of conger to 11kg, dogfish to 1.5kg, and big wrasse to 2.5kg, (well over specimen size). Spinning yields fine shore caught pollack to 4kg, mackerel and coalfish.

South east of Dawros is the small seaside village of **Rossbeg (E)** where lugworm and white ragworm are plentiful in the main channel banks. Peeler crab can also be gathered around the base of the rocks bordering the mouth of the bay.

The fishing on **Loughros Point (15)** is very similar to that found at Dawros. Indeed the south western side is also the best area to fish. The bottom is boulder strewn and weedy but seems to be alive with dogfish and pollack in particular. Specimen dogfish up to 1.70kg have been recorded there.

In the estuary formed by the Owenea and Owentocker Rivers, flounder and eels are very common to bottom baits of crab and sandeel. Spinning or freelining sandeel will result in seatrout on a flood tide. The area around **Ranny Point (16)** about a mile west of Ardara is a popular angling station with local fishermen. There is a well stocked tackle shop in Ardara.

To the southwest of Ardara, on the Bracky River estuary at **Maghera Strand (F)** there is good digging for lugworm, white ragworm and clam.











## ***Glen Bay to Mullaghmore, Map 4.***

To the west of the early Christian settlement of Glencolumbkille, named after the 6<sup>th</sup> century Saint Columba, lies the picturesque **Glen Bay (1)**. The coastline on the northern side of the bay is quite precipitous but there is good shore fishing from the much shallower rocks on the southern side. Here spinning accounts for mackerel, pollack, seatrout and occasional garfish, while casting out over sand in depths of around 6 metres will yield flounder, dabs and occasional ray.

**Rathlin O'Beirne Island (2)** which stands at the northern outermost corner of Donegal Bay has gained a place in Irish sea angling history, because it was here on 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2001 that local charter skipper Adrian Molloy broke the Irish record for bluefin tuna with a gigantic fish of 440kg. The huge fish took a trolled artificial squid and smashed the previous record of 240kg from the year before. Since then several 200kg plus fish have been caught in the area.

General boat fishing in the locality is also of a very high calibre with ling and cod to 9.5kg, pollack to 4.5kg, and ballan wrasse to 2.5kg being just some of the species on offer.

Tucked away between Malin Beg and Rossarell Point is the beautiful **Trabane (3)** a steep beach of pure white sand with two waterfalls tumbling into the sea. Flounders are abundant at the mouth of the streams and can be caught on small sandeel or crab baits. Dogfish are also common on similar baits at night and mackerel can be taken while spinning from the beach in summer. Beyond casting range, dabs, ray and turbot can be taken by small boat anglers, with the period two hours either side of high water being best. 16km to the east beyond some of the highest cliffs in Ireland at Slieve League is the Fjord like **Teelin Bay (4)**. From the pier in the western corner, dabs, flounder, coalfish, mackerel, and dogfish can be taken, specimen conger to 25kg have also been recorded there at night.

Water to over 20 metres deep is accessible from the rocks on the seaward side of the pier for pollack to 4kg and cod to 3kg.

Small boats can be launched from the slipway beside the pier, to fish under the cliffs for cod, pollack, mackerel, gurnard, coalfish, and flatfish. In some years whiting and haddock are also plentiful.

For many years Teelin has also been the home port to a number of charter boats and this is the nearest setting out point for the tuna grounds at Rathlin O'Beirne. There is, however other top class boat fishing locally particularly over a huge reef at Teelin Knowl, known to commercial fishermen as the "Big



Fast”, an obvious reference to the fact that over the years many sets of trawling gear have been lost there. The Knowl is a large area of rock, compared in size and dimensions to a football stadium, rising from 80 metres at its deepest point to just short of 50 metres at its height. Quality fishing is to be found there for pollack and coalfish to 5kg, cod to 9kg, ling to 11kg, and conger to 18kg. A large array of artificial lures work well over the reef, particularly baited, luminous “Devil Rigs”, baited chrome pirks, and shad type lures presented on “flying collar” rigs.

Some 5km south east of Teelin is **Muckros Head (5)** where spinning from the rocks produces pollack, mackerel and coalfish. Float fishing, using crab baits can be very rewarding for wrasse from one of the many natural rock platforms. In the eastern corner of Muckros Head is the small beach known as **Tralore (6)** and from there dogfish, dabs and occasional plaice and turbot can be taken, while to the south of the beach is a small quay where coalfish, pollack, corkwing and ballan wrasse are available. Some 4km east of Muckros is another small quay at **Shalway (7)** where small pollack can be taken in numbers at high tide, mainly on float fishing tackle. Dabs and flounder are also present some 55 metres out over sandy ground.

About 5km outside Killybegs, below the R263 road, is **Fintragh (8)** which is a popular beach with holiday makers. There is a large car park behind the beach which also serves the local GAA ground and from there it is a short walk over the dunes to the strand. During summer, Fintragh is almost impossible to fish during daylight due to the large numbers of people who congregate there. But at night the beach produces turbot, dogfish, dabs, and occasional ray and bass. Fishing in the channel at the eastern end produces flounder to over 1kg, and a slow moving sandeel bait is particularly effective. Seatrout will also occasionally fall to the same tactic. On the banks of **Fintragh Channel (A)** sandeel can be collected at low tide. On the eastern side of the channel is a small isolated bay known locally as **Nun's Cove (9)** where beach fishing produces the whole gamut of flatfish including flounder, plaice, dab, turbot and occasional sole. White ragworm and sandeel are the best baits and high water the best fishing time.

On **Drumanoo Head (10)** there are several rocky vantage points giving access to depths up to 10 metres close to the rock. Spinning produces mackerel, pollack and occasional garfish while bottom fishing yields conger to 9kg and huss to 5.5kg. Float fishing with crab or ragworm produces wrasse to 2kg, while dogfish and dabs can be taken from the sandy patches.

**Killybegs (11)** is Ireland's largest commercial fishing port and is home to many of the veritable giants of the Irish fleet. Several vessels of over 60 metres in length are berthed along the quays. In order to accommodate the fleet there has been a massive building programme which has included the construction of one of the finest slipways in Co.Donegal. Small boats can be launched without any difficulty and there is ample parking nearby for both vehicles and trailers.

A number of charter vessels are also based in the harbour and other than the late season tuna fishing mentioned previously there is a wide range of other species to aim at. Some of the recent specimen fish have included blue shark to over 54kg, conger to 22kg, pollack to 6kg, john dory to 2.25kg, ballan wrasse to 2.4kg, lesser spotted dogfish to 1.6kg, and cuckoo wrasse to .70kg.

The deep water at the piers and large amounts of fish offal washed overboard from trawlers encourages great shoals of mullet to frequent the harbour. Freelining or float fishing small fish baits is generally the way to take mullet there, but this sort of fishing should never be attempted without the use of a drop net, because the piers can be up to ten feet above the water level. To lift a large mullet out of the water and up the side of the pier would be to court disaster because the hook would almost certainly pull free from the soft tissue around the mullet's mouth. Grey mullet to 3.5kg have, however, been





recorded there including an ex Irish Record fish. The patient angler prepared to go bottom fishing with large baits, at night will possibly be rewarded by hooking one of the harbours resident congers. Fish close to 27 kg have been caught, and there are many anglers who will swear to losing bigger fish than that! So if you think that landing a big mullet is a problem then you should try tangling with a Killybegs conger.

There are a number of shops in Killybegs where items of tackle can be purchased.

In the upper reaches of the harbour where the **Stragar River (B)** enters the bay, lugworm can be dug on low tides and crab gathered among the weed and rocks along the eastern shore.

About 3km to the south on the same side of the harbour is one of the most productive shore angling marks on Donegal Bay. The **Gunwell (12)** is so called because a gun battery was sited there to guard the harbour during the first world war.

It is an almost unique site because fishing takes place with grass underfoot, on the edge of a meadow, overlooking water of some 18 metres deep! Fishing tight to the rock with fish baits will produce conger, while worm or crab baits, turn up ballan and corkwing wrasse. Spinning accounts for mackerel, pollack, coalfish, launce, garfish and seatrout.

A mere 20 metres lob will put baits over sand where ray, dogfish, pouting, dab, plaice and flounder can all be taken and smaller, more unusual species such as dragonet, clingfish, goldsinny wrasse and tompot blenny have also been recorded. Sandeel, mackerel, crab and worm baits all work well there. Access to the Gunwell is either by following the shore from the end of the road, which is about a twenty minute walk, or by the much shorter route across private land. In the latter instance, permission will be required.

At **Sand Loop (13)** to the north of Rotten Island Lighthouse, fishing from rock onto sand produces plaice, dabs and occasional ray with mackerel, sandeel and lugworm being the best baits.

St. John's Point is a 6km long finger of land running south west from the N56 road at Dunkineely where a narrow tarred road runs for almost the entire length to **St. John's Lighthouse (14)** at the tip. From the rocks below the lighthouse large bags of fish can be taken while spinning. Pollack, mackerel and coalfish are all available while bottom fished baits turn up wrasse to specimen size and conger. Care should be taken at all times in this area, but particularly during, or immediately after, south west gales as ground swells can swamp the rocks. About 5km from the lighthouse on the eastern shore is the small sandy cove of **Heelin Port (15)**. Fishing over rough ground on the southern





side of the bay yields pollack, coalfish, while conger over 14 kg have been recorded. Closer to the beach, fishing over sand at high water, will produce flounder dabs and dogfish.

From Mountcharles a road runs along the western side of Donegal Harbour to the Quay at **Salthill (16)** there is a tidal slipway from which boats can be launched to fish in the main channel for ray and tope. Tope can also be caught from the quay on a flooding tide. Best months are generally June and July and the most successful baits are fresh mackerel and launce.

From the quays in **Donegal Town (17)** small boats can be launched two hours either side of high water to fish in the River Eske estuary.

Flounders are quite common near the town but as the channel widens and deepens near the mouth, tope and dogfish can be taken during the summer. Monkfish are also a possibility, especially in the 13 metre “hole” in the channel south of the youth hostel at Hassans. Mullet are numerous in the harbour in summer and ground baiting will bring them around float fished baits. Sea trout can also occasionally fall to spinners or fly fished streamer flies at high water or just on the beginning of the ebb.

There is a well stocked tackle shop on Main Street.

South of Donegal Town in the vicinity of the Golf Club at **Bells Island (C)** lugworm are plentiful in the estuary, and can be easily dug.

From the N15 at Ballintra the R231 road runs to a large car park behind one of Donegal's most popular beaches at **Rossnowlagh (18)**. Fishing is virtually impossible there in fine weather during the summer months due to the throngs of people, so angling is restricted to night tides or during the cooler months of April, October and November.

Nonetheless when surf is roaring in, Rossnowlagh can be very rewarding to the patient angler. Bass up to 5kg have been recorded there and flounders over 1kg are also common. At night, dabs, turbot, ray and dogfish are also possible. Sandeel is by far the best bait on this beach although lugworm, ragworm and mackerel strip will also produce fish.

3km farther south on the R231, a small road runs down to the quay and slipway at **Creevy (19)**. A charter boat has been based there for a number of years and although the harbour is tidal, it is able to operate with a fair degree of success. Small boats cannot be launched or retrieved at low tide and would be anglers may have a two hour wait either side of low water on spring tides. Boat fishing is excellent for tope and ray in the area between Kildoney Point in the south east and Doorin Point to the North West. In the deeper water off St. John's Point, there is a wide range of species including pollack, cod, coalfish, wrasse, ling conger and whiting. Mackerel or ragworm baited terminal tackle such as the white feather or red feather devil rigs work well there. Shore fishing at high water from Creevy Pier yields ballan and corkwing wrasse pollack, coalfish, mackerel, small conger, dogfish, dab and plaice.

In the **River Erne Estuary (20)** west of Ballyshannon, seatrout can be taken on spinners or while fly fishing on a flooding tide. Flounders are also numerous in the channel but are inclined to be on the small side. Small boats can be launched from the slipway at the quay in Ballyshannon for boat fishing in the estuary or in calmer weather to venture over the Ballyshannon Bar to fish for ray, dabs, gurnards and plaice. At low tide in **Abbey Bay (D)** on the northern shore of the channel, lugworm can be dug and crab can be gathered around the numerous rocky outcrops.

From Ballyshannon the N15 runs south west for 6km to **Bundoran (21)** which is one of the most popular holiday towns in Donegal and has all the trappings from funfairs and arcades to trinket and souvenir shops. The pier offers fishing at high tide for pollack, wrasse and occasional conger while the slipway is tidal and unusable for an hour either side of low water. It is, however a good access point for small boat fishing in the inner reaches of Donegal Bay for tope, ray, dogfish, pollack, codling, gurnards and whiting. To the south west of Bundoran the N15 parallels the coast through a small section of Co. Leitrim which becomes shallow, boulder strewn and weedy, offering little to encourage shore angling. As the Co. Sligo border is crossed, the rocky shore begins

to give way to ground of a more sandy nature and at Mermaids Cove some excellent autumn fishing can be found in the sandy patches amongst the boulders for codling, dogfish, flounder and dabs. The first two hours of a flooding tide is the proven best period. Sandeel, lugworm and crab are the best baits there. Where the rock finally disappears on the beautiful beach at **Mullaghmore (22)** there is excellent fishing in autumn, mainly at night, for spurdog, dogfish, dabs and ray. Sandeel and lugworm are the best baits there. Specimen mullet over 2.7kg, small pollack and wrasse can be taken on float fishing tackle from the piers, while bottom fishing from the breakwater turns up plaice, dabs, dogfish

and occasional ray. Night tides are generally best. There is a tidal slipway at Mullaghmore and several charter boats operate from there during the summer. Some of the best boat fishing locally is to be found around Inishmurry Island where tope, spurdog, pollack, ling, coalfish and cod predominate. Fifteen tope to a boat is not uncommon in summer, all of which are tagged and returned alive to the sea. Blue shark are also a favourite target fish with local skippers and fish to 55kg have been recorded.



## Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.