

Give Fish a Chance (GFAC)



SSACN Catch and Release Guidelines

The 'Give Fish A Chance' initiative recommends anglers help ensure the future of our sport by adopting our GFAC sizes and release any fish that have not had a chance to breed.

Many studies have shown the survival rate of released fish can be greatly improved providing anglers release them appropriately - SSACN suggest the following simple guidelines :

Be prepared - Time is the vital factor - have all necessary equipment to hand in order to catch, land, photograph and release the fish. It sounds obvious, but the time taken to find forceps, T bars, cameras etc. buried in tackle boxes or under piles of clothing creates an unnecessary delay.

Use the correct terminal tackle - Use bronzed barbless hooks, or bronzed barbed hooks which have had the barb pinched with pliers – not stainless steel - try using circle hooks.

Use hooks and lines of appropriate sizes and strengths to handle the fish you hope to catch; use traces suited to the fishing conditions; shockleaders of appropriate strength.

Occasionally check the last few yards of the shockleader and all elements of your terminal tackle for abrasion wear and tear, especially when fishing over hard ground or for species with 'sandpaper' skins.

Play the fish steadily - Avoid over exhausting the fish by bringing it in firmly to the side of the boat or onto the beach, use a drop net if fishing from a pier or other high stance.

Handle carefully - A wet cloth or towel soaked in sea water should be placed over the fish's head ensuring the eyes are fully covered. This not only helps protect the fish from exposure or skin damage but it generally pacifies it and makes the removal of the hook an easier and safer procedure.

Take care when unhooking – do not squeeze the fish or hold it by the gills, support it from beneath and remove the hook by hand or with the use of a 'T' bar or long-nosed forceps. If the hook has become deeply embedded and the fish is unharmed in any other way, cut the line as close to the hook as possible and quickly return the fish - released this way they do survive.

Weigh the fish quickly – If a fish is to be weighed it should be immediately after unhooking using a weighing sling to ensure unsupported movement is restricted.

Releasing and Reviving the Fish - Wherever possible, gently support the fish, place it in the water facing into the current and allow it sufficient time to recover; if fishing from piers or other such high platforms, use a drop net or similar to lower the fish back into the sea.

Enjoy your fishing but please remember to respect your catch - following this simple code will help preserve fish stocks for generations to come.



The Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network

www.ssacn.org - Fish for the future – email: contact@ssacn.org

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