



It's all about the bass

Many of the bass found in the coastal waters around Cornwall originate from spawning grounds off southwest England. They spawn in the spring, and the fry gradually make their way to the UK coast, directed by currents and wind.

River estuaries, such as the Helford and Fal, are known to be nursery areas for juvenile bass, and those that make it, tend to spend their first few years feeding and growing there. When they are about four-years-old, the adolescent bass, still quite small, leave the nursery areas and head back to open water.

From the age of about seven, as young adults, they are able to reproduce. They do this by migrating offshore in the autumn, when they aggregate into large pre-spawning shoals, and head south west, ready to spawn in the spring. After spawning, the fish return to the same inshore summer feeding grounds every year. During the aggregation and migration phase, they are particularly vulnerable to commercial gill netting.



About 20 years ago an annual survey was started by the Helford Marine Conservation Group, to look at numbers of bass in the Helford estuary. The surveys, now including the Fal Estuary, are carried out

around ten times a year, by volunteers with a keen interest in marine biology and the environment; a number are also keen bass anglers.



In spring and early summer, they survey last year's fish to gauge how they have fared over their first winter. In late summer they are looking for this year's fish, to see how successful the spawning for the year has been, and therefore how strong the year class is likely to be.

Robin Bradley from Hicks Close is one of the surveyors. Robin, a lifelong bass angler, whose book 'A Bass Anglers Life' was published last year told the Probus News that over the years, bass numbers have reduced due to commercial fishing activity, environmental and other factors. Robin said that the survey provides essential data to marine conservation groups, government and the academic marine biology science community.

To find out more about bass fishing, go to www.ukbass.com.

For anyone who may be interested in helping with the bass surveys, please contact Robin via www.robinbradley.co.uk. Robin also writes a blog that's on his website too.



Photo credits: Robin Bradley

