

THAMES AND MEDWAY FISH IDENTIFICATION GUIDE



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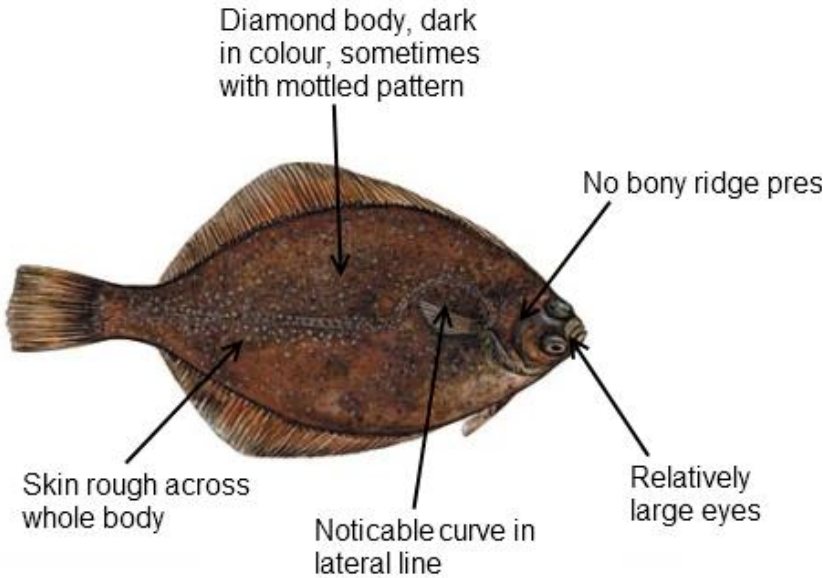
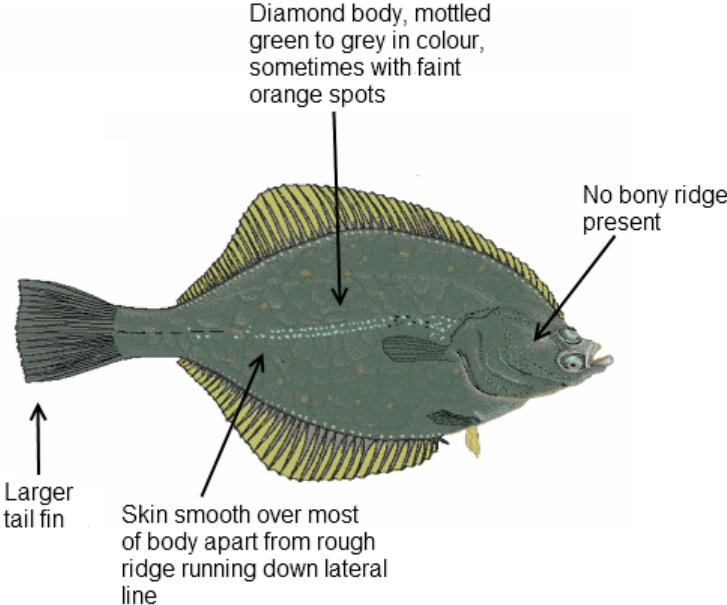
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NAVIGATION

This guide aims at helping related parties (e.g. volunteers, marshals, fishermen) to identify and distinguish between fish species that are often confused between each other in Thames & Medway estuaries. For every pair of fish species, photos or drawings are present against each other to provide a visual reference. They are then followed by features of each species, with most vivid highlighted in **bold red**. For some, additional advice on the vulnerability of fish caught and how best to handle them is provided, as this guide's best interest lies in the safe and conscious handling of inhabitants of local estuaries.

SPECIES DISTINCTION – FLATFISH

DAB VS FLOUNDER

FISH	DAB	FLOUNDER
General description	 Diamond body, dark in colour, sometimes with mottled pattern No bony ridge present Skin rough across whole body Noticable curve in lateral line Relatively large eyes British Sea Fishing (ND) Flatfish Identification guide	 Diamond body, mottled green to grey in colour, sometimes with faint orange spots No bony ridge present Larger tail fin Skin smooth over most of body apart from rough ridge running down lateral line British Sea Fishing (ND) Flatfish Identification guide
Differences	- Darker colour (from sandy-brown with yellow spots to a grey-brown with darker speckles with occasional green tinges) (Proudfoot, 2017) - More straight, narrow fins - Rear bottom fin closer to the head, more adjacent to body - Rougher skin - C-curve around pectoral fin	- Colours vary from green to grey, sometimes with spottings - Larger, more curved fins - Rear bottom fin is more outstanding and smaller - Spiney scales - Straight and rough lateral line

Examples



Proudfoot, 2013 Dab fish



Proudfoot, 2017 Flatfish identification, a simplified guide to common flatfish



Proudfoot, 2017 Flatfish identification, a simplified guide to common flatfish



Bad angling, (nd), Flounder

SOLE SPECIES VS SOLENETTE

FISH	SOLE SPECIES (DOVER SOLE)	SOLENETTE
General Description	 NOAA Fisheries (2023) Dover Sole	 Ruiz, (2007) Solenette
Differences	- Larger, up to 40-60 cm in length - Pectoral fins are tiny, with a black mark on the end	- Smaller, usually around 13 cm in length - Black stripes on every 5th/6th ray of dorsal and anal fins

Examples



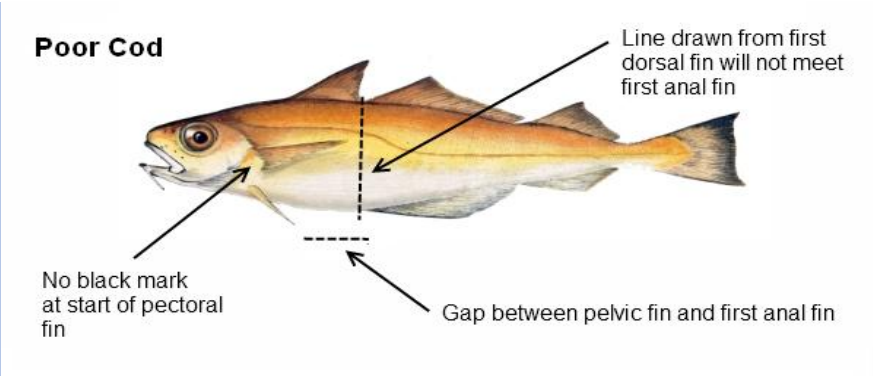
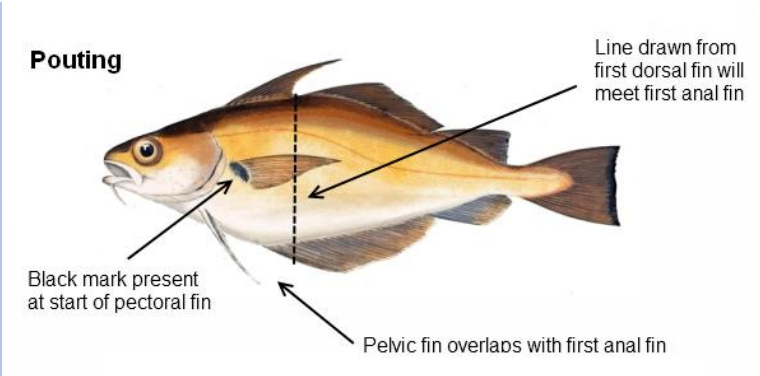
SeaAngler Editor (2009) Dover Sole



Heessen (2017) Solenette

SPECIES DISTINCTION - OTHER

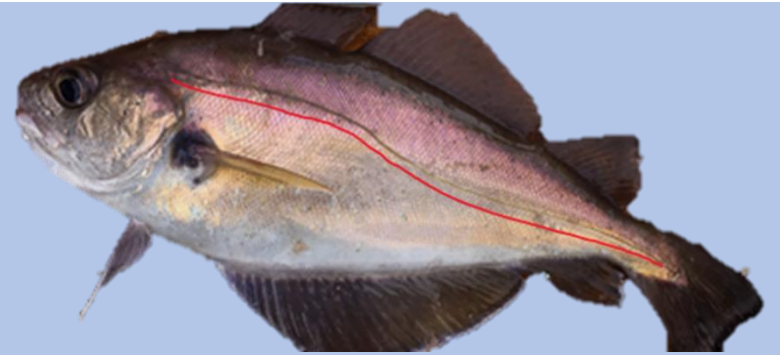
POOR COD VS POUTING

FISH	POOR COD	POUTING
General description	Poor Cod  Line drawn from first dorsal fin will not meet first anal fin No black mark at start of pectoral fin Gap between pelvic fin and first anal fin British Sea Fishing (ND) Identifying poor cod and pouting	Pouting  Line drawn from first dorsal fin will meet first anal fin Black mark present at start of pectoral fin Pelvic fin overlaps with first anal fin British Sea Fishing (ND) Identifying poor cod and pouting
Differences	- Slimmer body, usually smaller - The scales will come away easily when handling the fish - Can sometimes be a lighter green/yellow - Small, straight pectoral fin without black mark - Pelvic fin reaches to the anal vent & stops before anal fin - If you draw a line from the anal vent direct up the body, on a poor cod you reach the end of the first dorsal fin	- Deeper, diamond-shaped body - Harder for scales to come away - Can be a darker brown colour - Black mark at the start of pectoral fin - Pelvic fin reaches over anal vent & past 1st anal fin - If you draw a line from the anal vent direct up the body, the vent is in line with the start of the first dorsal fin

Examples



Owen, G. (2016) Fish Identification – Poor cod & Pouting

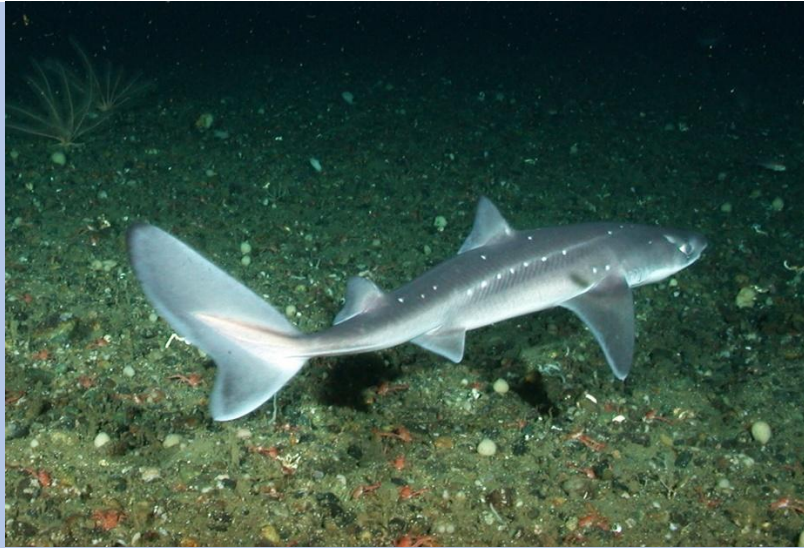


Owen, G. (2016) Fish Identification – Poor cod & Pouting

DOG FISH VS SMOOTH-HOUND

FISH	DOG FISH	SMOOTH-HOUND
General description	 Hans Hillewaert, Dog fish	 British Sea Fishing, (ND), Smooth-hound
Differences	- Long and slim; usually tan/light brown, covered in small dark spots, underside is light grey to white - Skin is very rough to the touch - Nasal grooves reach the mouth - Two dorsal fins are set far back on the body - Pectoral fins are large and triangular	- Long body, widening towards middle - First dorsal fin is large, second is only slightly smaller & locates further back - Pectoral fins are large - Snout is pointed & eyes prominent - Crushing plates rather than sharp teeth - Underbelly is cream/pale; may have white spots on top - 'Hooked' tail shape - Classified as vulnerable - Should not be pulled out of the water by tail, but supported under tail <u>and</u> the belly

Examples



Britannica (ND) Dogfish



Sharkwater (ND) Common Smooth-hound

ROACH VS RUDD

FISH	ROACH	RUDD
General description	 Richard Bain, Roach	 Bad Angling, (ND), Rudd
Differences	- Body colouration of adults tends to be silvery blue. <i>Young body colouration is not distinguishable between the 2 species so this character should NOT be used alone</i> - Tend to have thinner bodies - Tend to be lighter - High back - Reddish fins - Dorsal fin in line with pelvic fins - Eye colour strong reddish colour BUT can vary - Downturned mouth typical of carp family	- Body colouration of adults tends to be yellowish brown or golden. <i>Young body colouration is not distinguishable between the 2 species so this character should NOT be used alone</i> - Tend to have deeper bodies - Tend to be heavier - Sharp edged belly - Deep red fins - Dorsal fin behind pelvic fins - Eye colour usually faded yellowish grey BUT can vary - Upturned mouth due to feeding on surface insects

Examples



Richard Bain, Roach



Fishery Guide, (ND), Roach vs Rudd

HERRING VS SPRAT

FISH	HERRING	SPRAT
General description	 David Fenwick Snr, (ND), Atlantic Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) (Published on the MarLIN website)	 Holly Latham, (ND), Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>) (Published on the MarLIN website)
Differences	- Adults are usually larger, but juveniles are similar sizes between the 2 species - Silver with dark blue iridescence on upper half of body - Blunt keel - Large fragile scales that are easily removed - Dorsal fin begins in front of pelvic fin - Prominent lower jaw	- Adults usually smaller, but juveniles are similar sizes between the 2 species - Silver to grey in colour - Sharp toothed keel – underside feels rough/sharp - Dorsal fin either in line or behind the pelvic fin - Deep body

Examples



British Sea Fishing (ND) Atlantic Herring



British Sea Fishing (ND) European sprat

SALMON VS TROUT

FISH	SALMON	TROUT
General description	 Photo by John Cameron on Unsplash	 Photo by Matthew McBrayer on Unsplash
Differences	- Slender and streamlined - Few spots that rarely cross the lateral line - Maxilla does not extend beyond the eye - Forked or concave tail - Slender wrist of the tail (Easy to grip)	- Round and thick - Lots of spots that appear above and below lateral line - Maxilla extends beyond eye - Square or convex tail - Broad wrist of tail is broad

Examples



Photo by [John Cameron](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Photo by [Jack Charles](#) on [Unsplash](#)

SMELT

FISH	SMELT
General description	 Richard Bain, Smelt
Differences	- Long and slim - Light olive green back and creamy white belly and silvery stripe on flanks - Maxilla reaches further back than the eye - Protruding lower jaw - Pointed head - Tall, short dorsal fin that starts behind pelvic fin - Adipose fin - Tall and short anal fins - Large caudal fin

Examples



Richard Bain, Smelt



Richard Bain, Smelt

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