



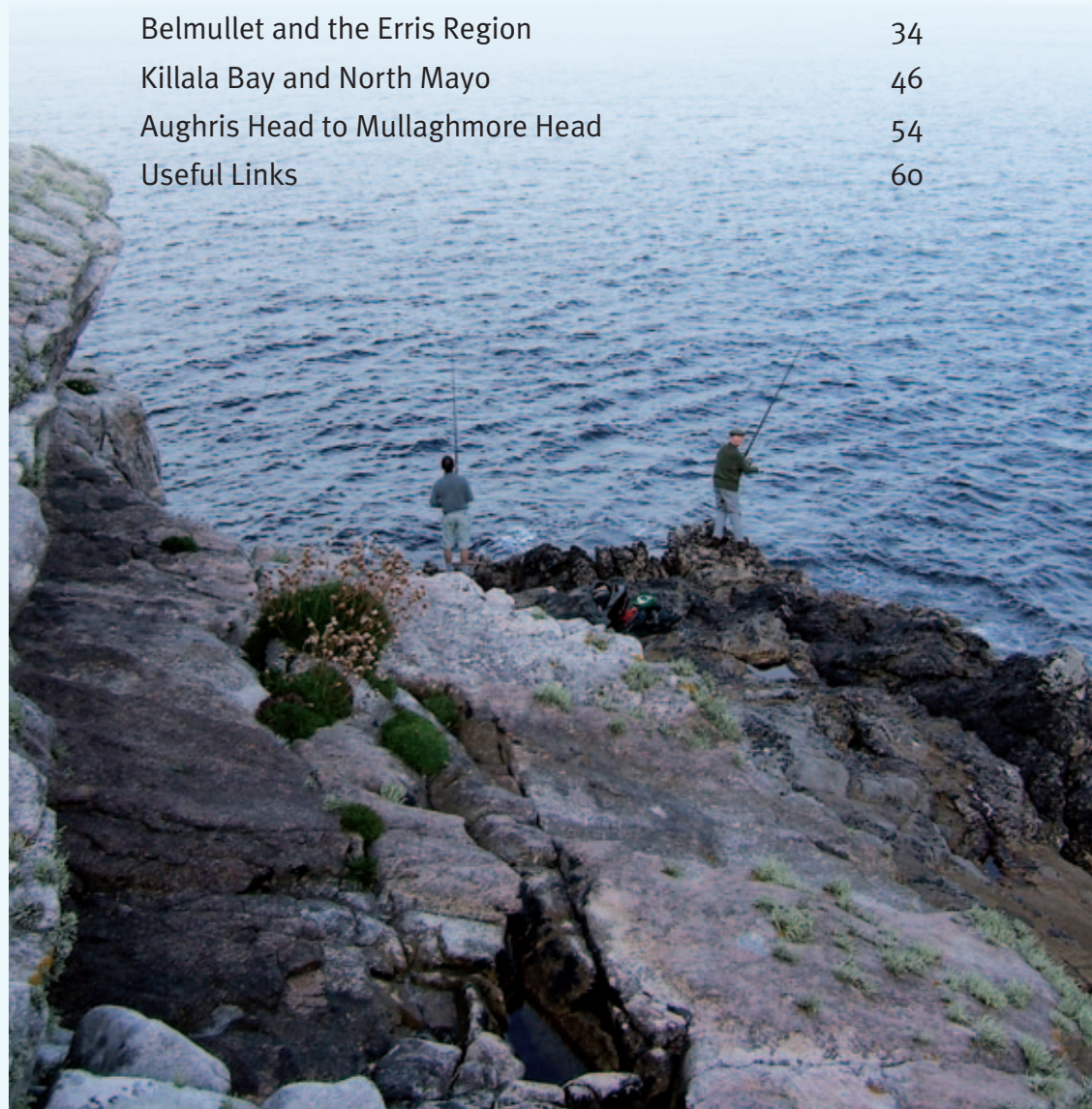
**A GUIDE TO
SEA ANGLING
IN THE
NORTH WESTERN FISHERIES REGION
by
Norman Dunlop**



Produced by the Central Fisheries Board for and on behalf of the North Western Regional Fisheries Board.
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Foreword

The North Western Regional Fisheries Board is responsible for the promotion of sea angling in its region which extends from Pigeon Point, Clew Bay, Co. Mayo to Mullaghmore Head, Co. Sligo. The Board is delighted to co-operate with the Central Fisheries Board in compiling this guide which, we hope, beginners and experienced sea anglers will find useful.

The region has an extremely varied coastline ranging from high sea cliffs on Achill Island, Benwee Head and Downpatrick Head, on the North Mayo coast, through large bays at Blacksod, Broadhaven, Killala and Sligo, to the roaring surf beaches on the west of the Mullet Peninsula and at Enniscrone and Streedagh in Co. Sligo. Established angling centres and charter boats are to be found along this seaboard which also offers excellent shore fishing for a wide variety of species.

This guide gives detailed information on all angling areas and shore fishing marks. It provides details of local contacts, fish species and baits that are best suited to the area. Anglers will have ready access to all necessary information on sea angling including maps and illustrations.

I wish to take this opportunity to wish all anglers the best of luck while fishing and to remind them to fish safely at all times.

Vincent Roche
Chief Executive Officer
North Western Regional Fisheries Board

CREDITS

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Specimen fish data courtesy of the Irish Specimen Fish Committee.

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 do 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 like 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

Anglers at sea in boats of less than 7 metres are required by law to wear lifejackets. Lifejackets are recommended anyway, even for fishing from the rocky shore. Although usually safe, there is a risk of strong winds and rarely-experienced freak waves. Licensed angling boats are required to carry a full complement of safety equipment. Users of dinghies or small boats should carry a flare pack in case of emergencies.

Many anglers enjoy a lifetime during which no such emergency ever arises – but the sea can always do unexpected things – and that is when life jacket and flare pack make all the difference between an adventure and a tragedy. It is always wise for both boat and shore anglers alike to inform their hosts of where they are going and when they should be expected back. Local advice should be obtained and respected.

Tide times and weather forecasts should be checked (see page 60). Many of the most favoured rock-fishing stands can be cut off by the tide and rock fishing is always risky in onshore winds of more than Force 5.

CONSERVATION

Conservation – the “wise use” of the resource – is applied throughout Ireland, directed not only to the fish species but to the habitat itself. Ongoing scientific studies of the fish stocks show that the populations of the majority of species of sport fish on the Irish coast are in a healthy state and no special measures for their conservation are required by anglers. However, unwanted fish should be returned safely to the water to help conserve the stocks. Fishing skippers and the big-game fishers have taken to tagging and releasing sharks, skates and other trophies. Regulations apply for the protection of a small number of high-risk species.

Sea Trout

A state licence is required to fish for sea trout. Most of the tackle dealers are licence distributors, but licences may also be purchased from the Regional Fisheries Board's office at Ardnaree House, Abbey Street, Ballina. The killing of sea trout is prohibited by law in that part of the region south of Achill Head and on waters that flow into the sea in that area. There is a general bag limit of six sea trout per angler and size limits which vary from 10 in (25.4 cm) to 12 in (30.48 cm) depending on location.

Bass

Bass fishing is forbidden during the spawning season, from 15th May to 15th June. At all times there is a size limit of 40 cm (16 in), from tip of snout to end of tail. All smaller fish must be handled gently and returned alive. There is a bag limit of two bass in any one day. Selling your bass is prohibited.

Skate

Because skate grow slowly and big ones are at high risk from over-fishing, the common skate has been removed from the Irish Specimen Fish scheme. White skate may be entered for it.



Fish Species

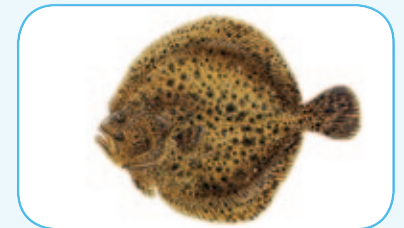
Flounder (*Platichthys flesus*)

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 2.26 kg (5 lbs). Often occurs in fresh water well above the limits of the tide. Specimen weight: 1.1 kg (2.42 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 18 kg (40 lbs), Specimen weight: 8.16 kg (18 lbs).



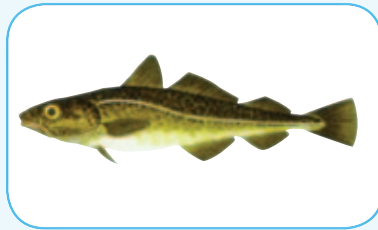
Pollack (*Pollachius pollachius*)

Very popular sport fish. Can be taken from both boat and shore on the North Western 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 9.07 kg (20 lbs). Specimen weight: 5.4kg (12 lbs).



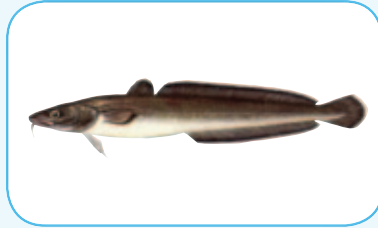
Cod (*Gadus morhua*)

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 22kg (50 lbs). Specimen weight: 9.07 kg (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 22 kg (50 lbs). Specimen Weight: 11.34 kg (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 (*Lubrus*)

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 4.5 kg (10 lbs), specimen weight 2.15 kg (4.75 lbs), and the colourful Cuckoo Wrasse (*Labrus mixtus*) (which grows to around .9 kg (2 lbs), specimen weight, .567 kg (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. It is most common south of a line drawn from Galway to Dublin with, apparently, growing populations in the North Western 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 9 kg (20 lbs). Specimen weight: 4.536 kg (10 lbs).



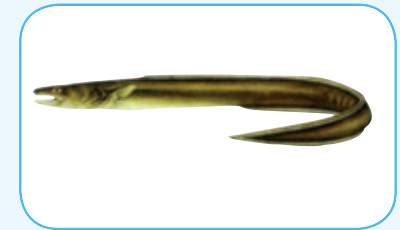
Gurnard (*Triglidae*)

There are three species of Gurnard which anglers can expect from waters in the North Western region. Grey Gurnard (*Eutrigla gurnardus*) which grows to about 3.5 lbs; Red Gurnard (*Aspitrigla cuculus*) which grows to about 4 lbs and Tub Gurnard (*Trigla lucerna*) which grows to over 12 lbs. 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: 18.14 kg (40 lbs).



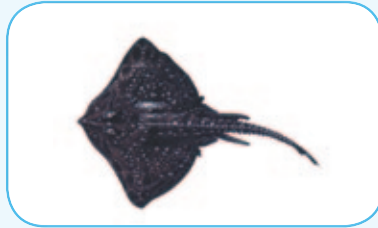
Tope (*Galeorhinus galeus*)

Medium sized shallow water shark, fairly common on the North Western 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” but much larger females are either “loners” or are found in small groups. Grows to about 36 kg (80 lbs). Specimen weight: 18.14 kg (40 lbs).



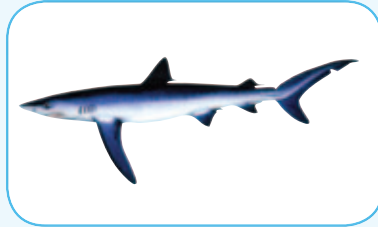
Ray (*Raja*)

Popular with boat and shore anglers and often confused with skate; 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 North Western region. They are Thornback Ray (*Raja clavata*) (specimen weight 9.07 kg, 20 lbs), Blonde Ray (*Raja brachyura*) (11.3 kg, 25 lbs), Homelyn Ray (*Raja montagui*) (2.268 kg, 5 lbs) and Torpedo Ray (9.072 kg, 20 lbs). The Irish Record for the latter (40kg) is held in the region.



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 North Western region, the others being caught only occasionally. Shark fishing is very popular during the summer months.



Skate (*Raja*)

Three species of skate have been recorded by anglers in the region - White Skate (*Raja alba*) (specimen weight 54.3 kg, 120 lbs); Long Nose Skate (*Raja oxyrinchus*) (specimen weight 36.287 kg, 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 90 kg (200 lbs) have re-appeared in the North Western region. The Irish Record White Skate of 74.8 kg (165 lbs) is held in the area.



NORTH WESTERN REGION SEA FISH RECORDS

Species	Weight Lbs	Weight Kg	Name	Place of capture	Date
Bass	14lb 20z	6.41	Jack Tarmey	Bertra Beach	25-Jun-63
Black Sole	2lb 4.870z	1.05	Roy Howarth (GB)	Achill Island	16-Jun-81
Coalfish	22lb 40z	10.09	Thomas Walsh	Belmullet	1-Jul-73
Cod	36lb	16.33	J. V. Hatterm (NL)	Enniscrone	18-Jul-79
Conger Eel	52lb	23.59	Stanley Swallow	Purteen Pier	27-Jul-66
Dab	1.71lb	0.78	Michael Kearney	Belmullet	28-Jul-90
Dogfish - Greater Spotted	19lb 60z	8.79	Thomas Lyons	Enniscrone	11-Sep-80
Dogfish - Lesser Spotted	4lb 1.50z	1.86	Padraic Conlon	Westport	17-Aug-85
Dogfish - Spur	15lb 120z	7.14	John Rowe	Killala Bay	8-Aug-71
Flounder	3.439lb	1.560	Desmond Boyle	Lacken	17-Oct-99
Garfish (B. bellone)	2lb 80z	1.13	Berger Werner (D)	Enniscrone	23-Sep-79
Gurnard - Grey	2.24lb	1.02	Dominick Cassidy	Belmullet	3-Jul-95
Gurnard - Red *	3lb 9.50z	1.63	James Prescott	Broadhaven Bay	18-Jul-72
Gurnard - Tub *	12lb 3.50z	5.542	Robert J. Seaman	Bullsmouth	9-Aug-77
Haddock	8lb 80z	3.86	J. Furness (GB)	Clare Island	1-Jul-79
Hake	22lb 80z	10.21	Franz Buchen (D)	Enniscrone	30-Jul-82
Halibut *	156lb	70.76	Frank Brogan	Belmullet	24-Jul-76
John Dory *	7lb 80z	3.40	Cleona Walkin	Killala	13-Aug-88
Ling	28lb 80z	12.93	William McGonigle	Achill Island	20-Oct-84
Mackerel	2lb 12.750z	1.27	S. Totten	Belmullet	22-Sep-79
Megrim *	4.078lb	1.85	Paul Hennigan	Killala Bay	27-Jul-91
Monkfish	69lb	31.298	M. Fuchs	Westport	2-Jul-62
Mullet - Red	1.72lb	0.780	Joe Cooney	Achill	31-Aug-11
Mullet - Thick-lipped	8.25lb	3.74	Markus Muller	Lough Furnace	27-Jul-00
Plaice	10lb 80z	4.76	James Stafford	Achill Island	6-Sep-77
Pollack	18lb 70z	8.363	Joseph Halligan	Killala Bay	26-Oct-07
Pouting	3lb 90z	1.62	Rudi Schosland (D)	Mullaghmore	4-Sep-86
Ray - Blonde	26lb 120z	12.13	E. Boucher	Killala Bay	21-Jul-73
Ray - Cuckoo	4lb 11.50z	2.14	Paddy Whelan	Killala	16-Sep-77
Ray - Electric *	88.18lb	40	Shay Boylan	Achill	24-Aug-02
Ray - Homelyn	6lb 70z	2.92	Gerry Erskine	Enniscrone	1-Aug-81
Ray - Painted	5.103lb	5.103	Francis Hanrahan	Achill	10-Sep-09
Ray - Thornback	25lb 80z	11.57	John Tucker	Enniscrone	1-Aug-78
Red Sea Bream	5lb 130z	2.64	Nora McMullan	Achill Island	8-Aug-86
Shark - Blue *	206lb	93.44	J. McMonagle	Achill Island	8-Oct-63
Shark - Porbeagle *	262lb	118.84	Mrs. P. Sweeney	Keem Bay	2-Sep-64
Skate - Common	208lb	94.35	Leonard F. Hopkins	Clare Island	30-Aug-75
Skate - White *	165lb	74.84	Jack Stack	Westport	8-Aug-70
Tope	52lb	23.59	W. J. Eley	Broadhaven Bay	12-Aug-67
Torsk	6.28lb	2.85	Samuel Hull	Belmullet	22-Aug-92
Trigger Fish	3.27lb	1.48	Alan Jones (GB)	Achill Island	10-Sep-99
Turbot	32lb 80z	14.74	Robert Seaman	Belmullet	7-Sep-84
Whiting	4lb 60z	1.98	John Furness (GB)	Clare Island	19-Jun-80
Wrasse - Ballan	6lb 7.50z	2.93	P. McNamara	Keel West	13-Oct-66
Wrasse - Cuckoo	1.62lb	0.73	John Loftus	Mullaghmore	6-May-00

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* Current Irish Record



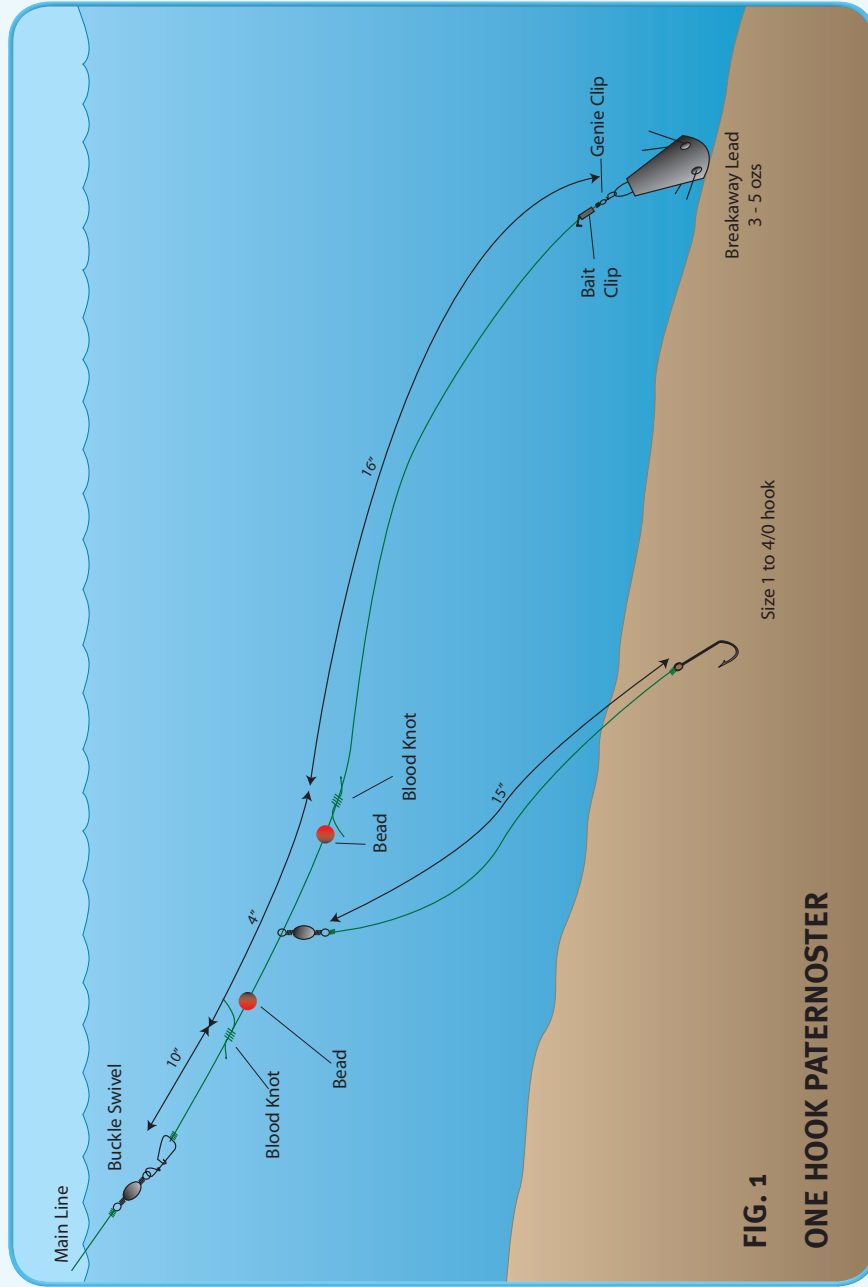
Basic Terminal Tackle

There are two basic types of terminal tackle which the sea angler will find useful in the North Western 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

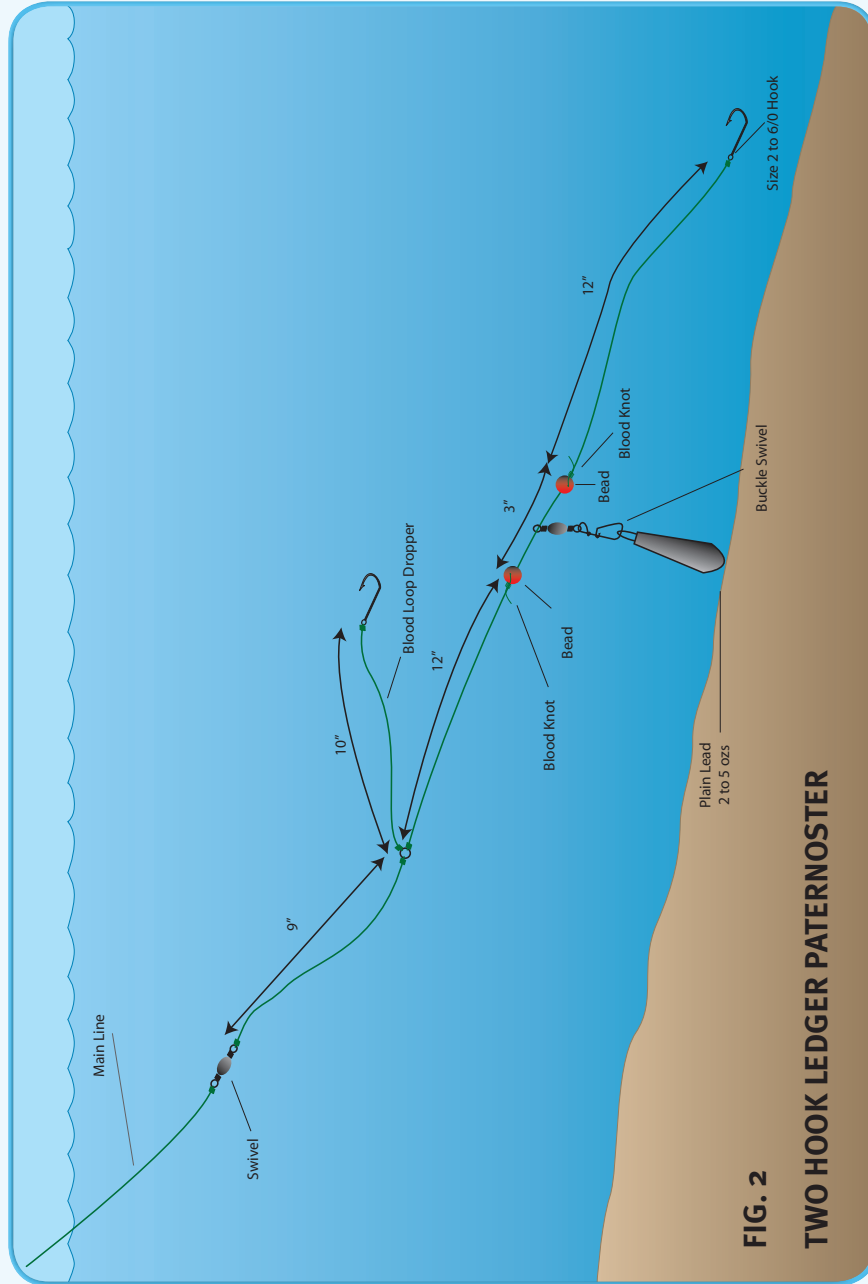
In general, multi-hook rigs do not lend themselves to shore fishing at many locations in the North Western Region as the sea bed can be very mixed and the more hooks one has on the end of the line, the greater are the chances of fouling the bottom.

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.



The **One Hook Paternoster** (fig. 1) 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.

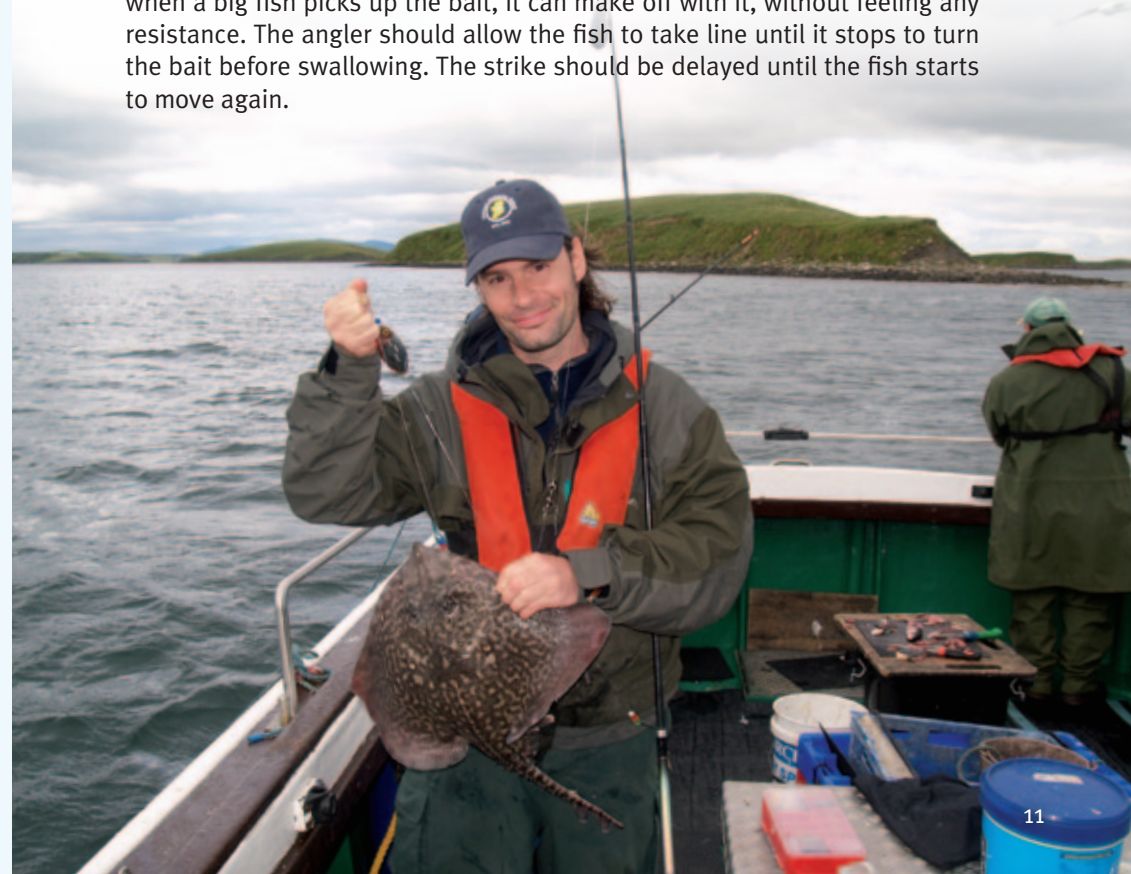
When fish are feeding close to the shoreline and distance casting is not essential, the **Two Hook Paternoster/Leger** (fig. 2) is recommended because it offers the angler the best of both worlds in that a conventional snood can be fished while legering at the same time. This system works particularly well for flatfish on open beaches and will also take ray, dogfish etc. from deep water rock marks which give access to sandy ground.

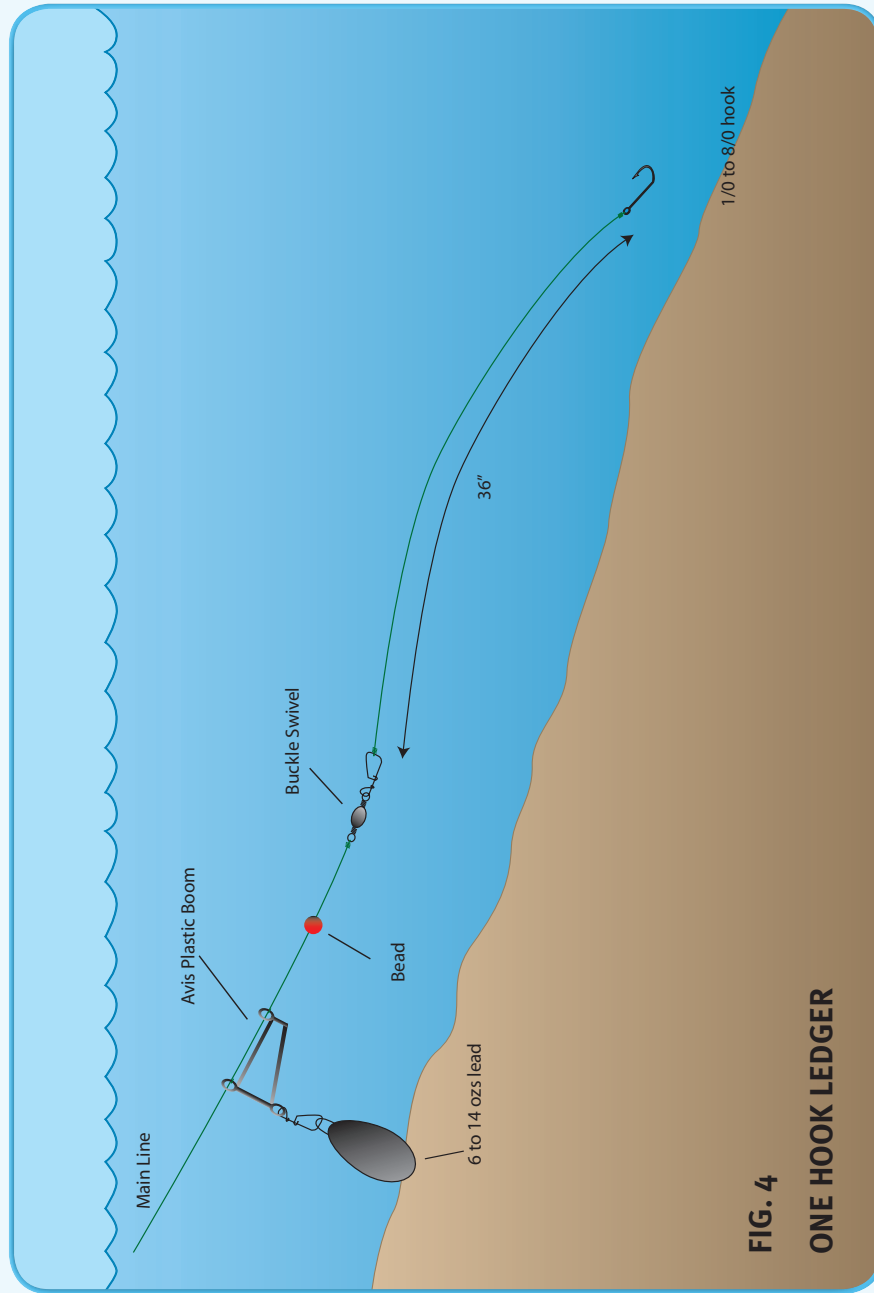
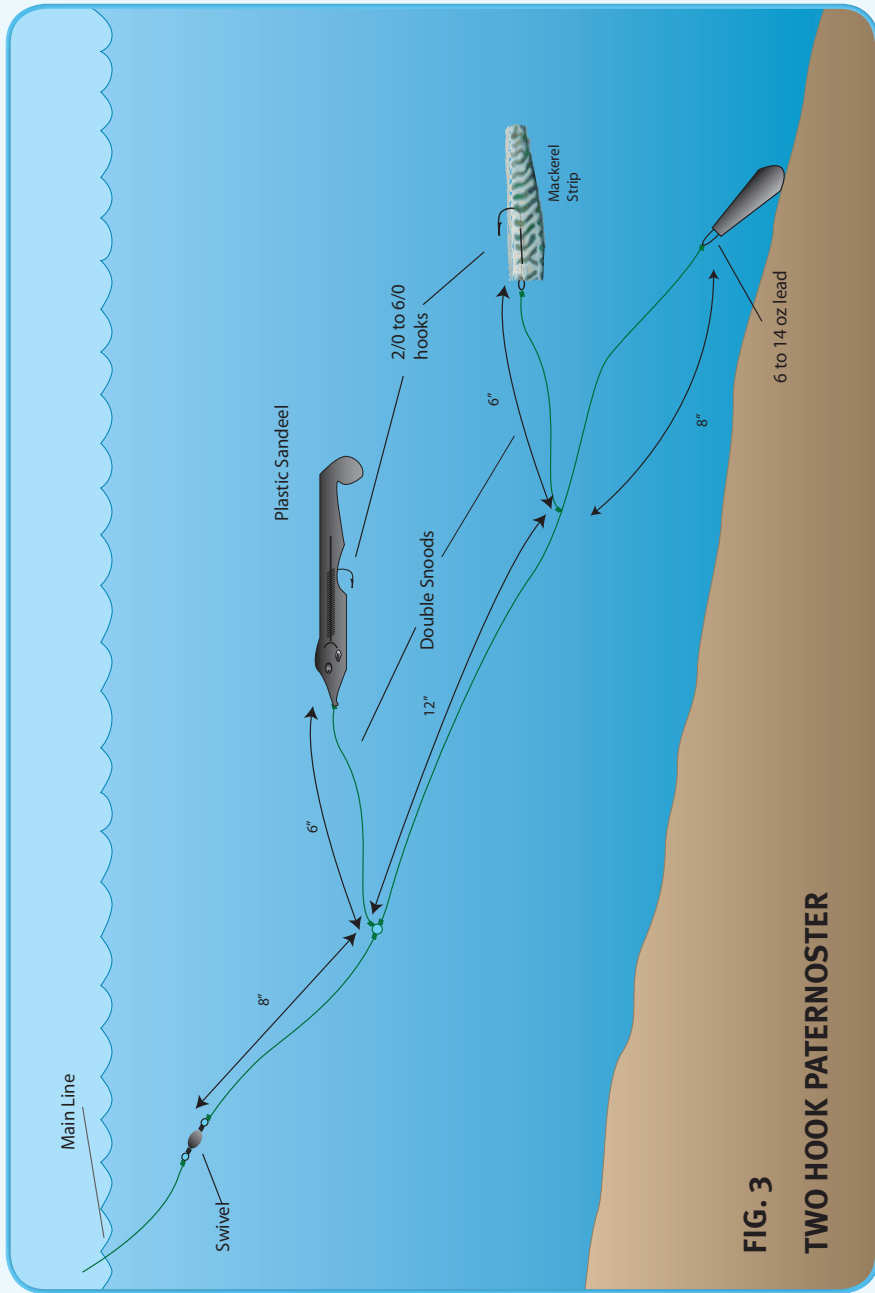


BOAT FISHING

The **Boat Fishing Paternoster** (fig. 3) 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. 4) 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 break. 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.





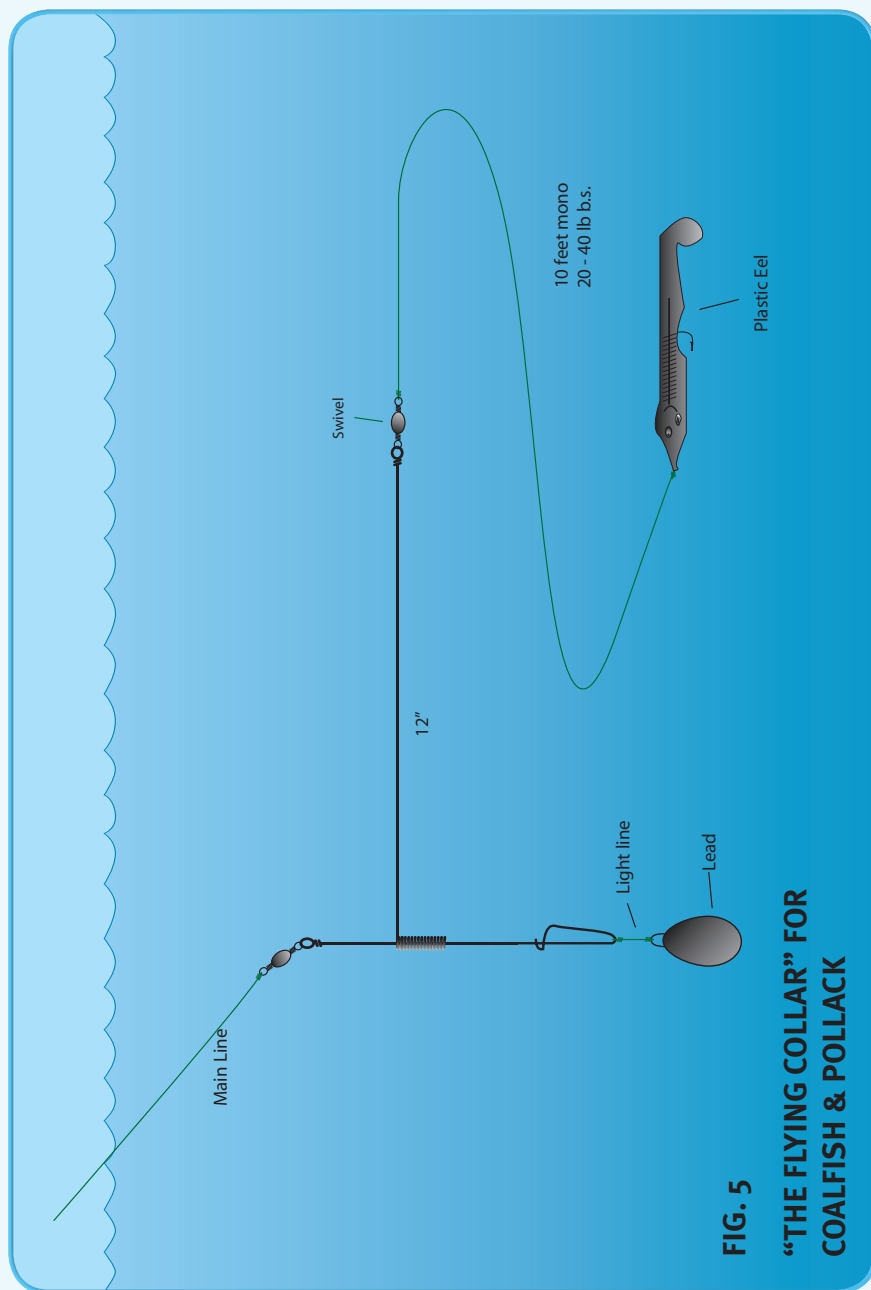


FIG. 5
“THE FLYING COLLAR” FOR
COALFISH & POLLACK

There are many specialist boat rigs based on either of the above but one of the most successful fish catchers in the North Western area is the **“Flying Collar”** (fig. 5). 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. 6). 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!

SALT WATER FLY FISHING

The rocky headlands and estuaries around the coast of the North Western Region offer a wealth of opportunities for the angler interested in fly fishing. Fly fishing around the coast of Ireland is still a minority branch of sea angling but it is growing rapidly in popularity. Many enthusiastic anglers enjoy the mobile and delicate approach that fly fishing in the sea can bring.

The two main species targeted by fly fishermen in the North Western Region are the pollack and the sea trout. Both fish are plentiful and offer excellent sport on appropriate tackle. Mackerel are regularly caught during the summer months and the occasional bass may be encountered, but are generally not targeted on fly in the North Western Region.

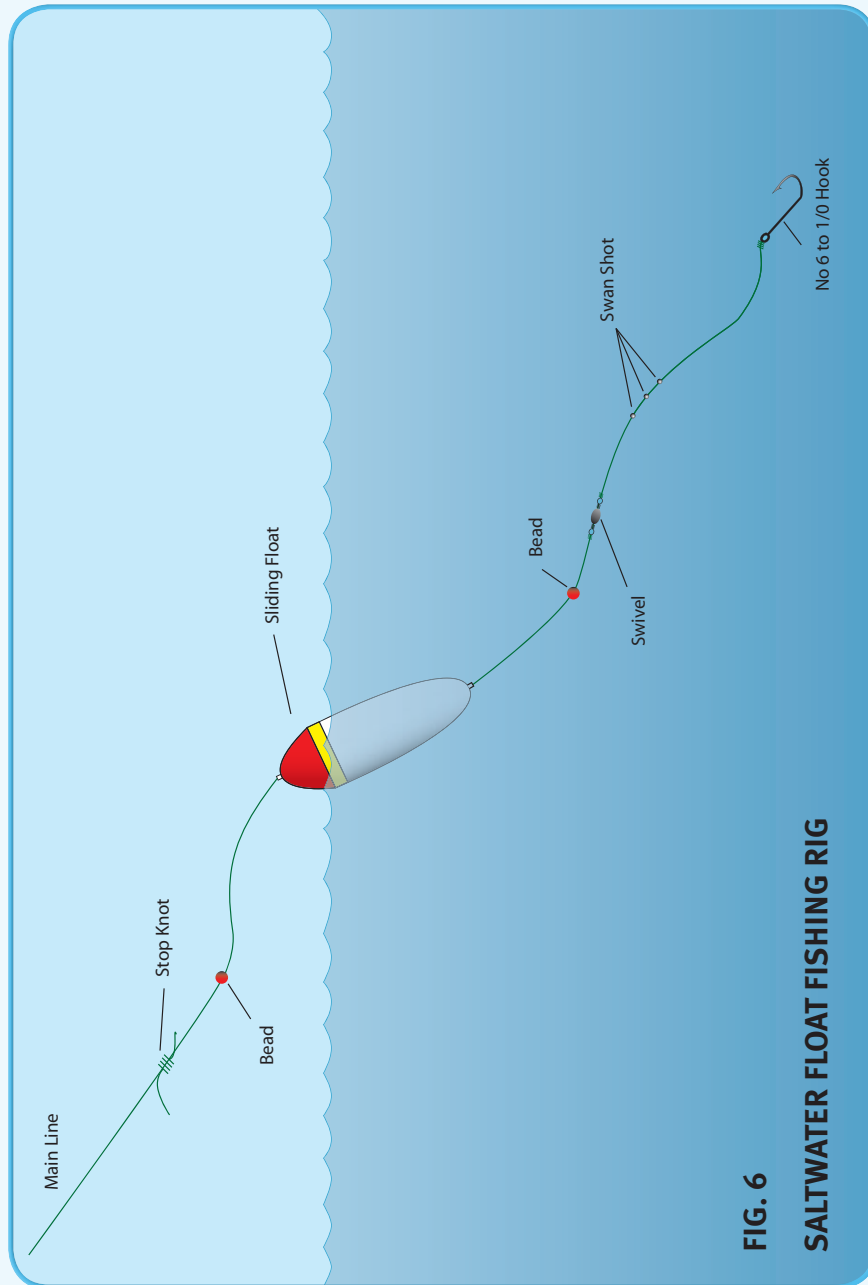


FIG. 6
SALTWATER FLOAT FISHING RIG

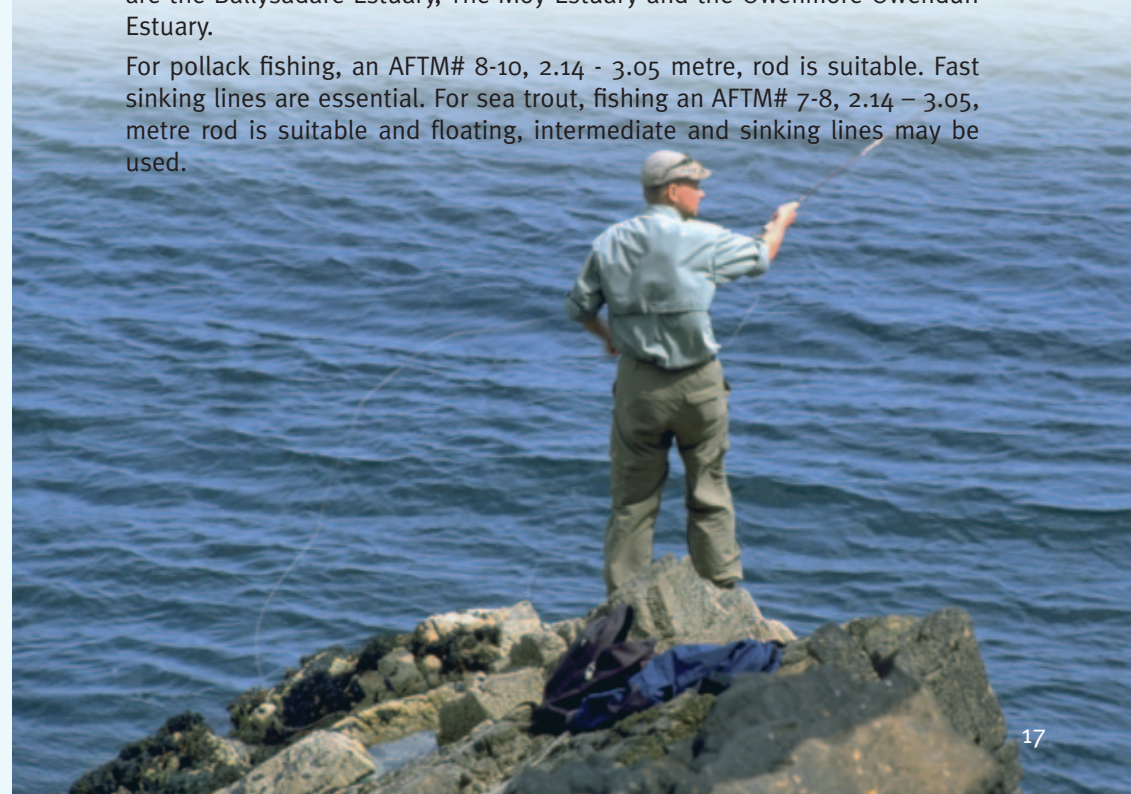
Fly fishing for pollack primarily takes place off rocky headlands and along rocky shorelines with access to deep water. They are regularly found well within the casting range of most fly anglers. Room to back cast can be a limiting factor at some steep rock marks. Fly patterns around 5 cm. in length or less, imitations of bait fish, with silver and blue colours, are commonly used.

Good pollack fishing marks are Mullaghmore Head, Downpatrick Head (Please note comments in main text relating to dangers at this location), Portacloy and along Atlantic Drive on Achill Island.

Fly fishing for sea trout primarily takes place in the estuaries of the main rivers in the region. The sandy nature and strong tidal currents of the main estuaries along the north western coast, creates ideal conditions for sea trout to feed. Angling is carried out by wading sandbars or fishing from a boat and casting into flowing water. Tidal flow is an important factor in controlling the feeding habits of the sea trout with shoals of fish moving from lower to upper reaches of the estuary on each tide. The best stage of the tide for fishing can vary depending on location but, generally, the few hours before and after low tide is regarded as the most productive. Sandeel type fly patterns, small lures and shrimp patterns are all regularly used when fishing for sea trout.

The main estuaries for sea trout fishing in the North Western Region Fisheries are the Ballysadare Estuary, The Moy Estuary and the Owenmore-Owenduff Estuary.

For pollack fishing, an AFTM# 8-10, 2.14 - 3.05 metre, rod is suitable. Fast sinking lines are essential. For sea trout, fishing an AFTM# 7-8, 2.14 - 3.05, metre rod is suitable and floating, intermediate and sinking lines may be used.



Basic rod, Line & Reel configurations for the North Western 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 gm.	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 uptide 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 North Western 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 North Western 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 North Western 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 “herringbone 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, 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 in Ireland 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 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 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.

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.

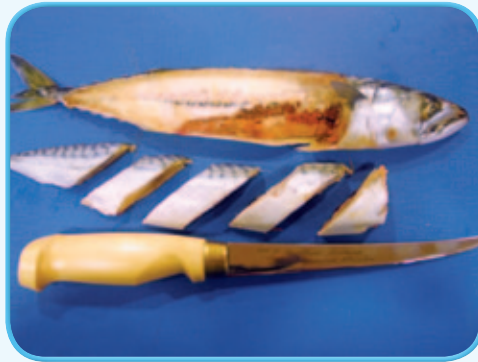
Another excellent boat and shore bait is **Razorfish** (*Ensis siliqua*) which are fairly common in the North Western Region, but requiring a little more effort to collect than mussel.

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. Most local tackle shops now carry a supply of vacuum packed, frozen mackerel.

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

Lesser sandeel are common along sandy shores and are excellent bait for bass, pollack, and dogfish. 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 sandeel 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.

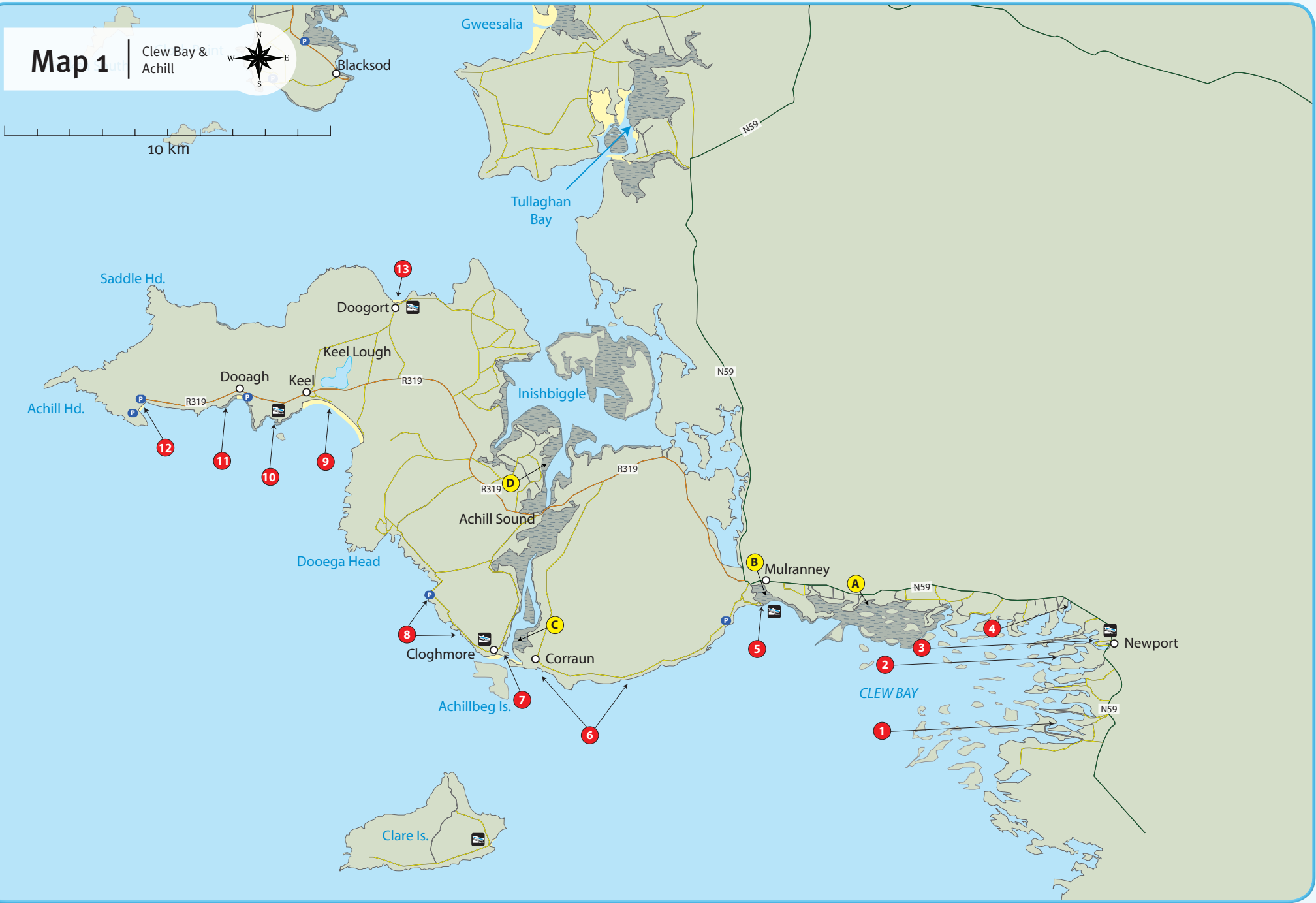


SIGNPOSTING

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

Map 1

Clew Bay & Achill



The Region

The North Western Fisheries Region's sea angling area extends from Pigeon Point, north west of Westport, on Clew Bay, Co. Mayo to Mullaghmore Head on the south western shore of Donegal Bay. The area contains a multi-faceted shoreline featuring some of Ireland's highest and most awe inspiring sea cliffs at Achill Island and Downpatrick Head, many picturesque bays and backwaters such as Broadhaven, Killala and Sligo Bays and some of the finest beaches and surf strands in the entire country such as those at Keel, Cross, Enniscrone and Rosses Point. The north western corner of the region is arguably the nearest part of Ireland to the edge of the Continental Shelf and the whole area boasts possibly the widest range of marine species to be found anywhere in the country. Boat fishing has been carried out in the region for over 100 years and shore fishing, of a sort, for food rather than sport, probably preceded that.

Map 1 : Northern Clew Bay and Achill Island

It is said that Clew Bay has 365 islands, one for every day of the year. This complex system of islands, reefs and rocks provides shelter in even the most severe weather conditions. The notorious sixteenth century clan chief, sea trader, and pirate Grace O'Malley or Granuaile (circa 1530 to 1603) used Clew Bay as her centre of operations. There she maintained an abbey at Murrisk, at the foot of Ireland's holy mountain Croagh Patrick, and fortified houses overlooking the harbour on Clare Island and at Rockfleet near Newport.

Rossmoney (1) is located north west of Westport and 3 miles (4.83km) west of the N59. A walk of about 200 yards (183m) to the right of the pier leads to a point. A 70 to 100 yard (64 to 91m) cast, avoiding the rock outcrops, is required to put bait among fish. Dogfish, bull huss, ray and conger are available there and one hour either side of low water is the best period.

To the south of Newport, and west of the N59, are several points **(2)** from which fishing can take place. Dogfish and bull huss are available at all locations, but small pollack turn up at Rosnakilly, flounder at Ross Point, and ray and mackerel at Rossanrubble.

There is float fishing for mullet, from the end of the quay in **Newport (3)** and pre baiting for a couple of days should encourage fish to feed. Spinning occasionally turns up sea trout while flounders take crab or worm baits. The best fishing is usually found on the first two hours of the flood tide.



A fully certified charter boat operates for most of the year from either Newport Quay or Roigh Pier and provides excellent inshore fishing for ray, tope, huss, dogfish and common skate. All skate caught on rod and line in this area are tagged and released under the CFB Marine Sportfish Tagging Programme. Since the inception of the programme, in 1980, there has been a marked increase in the number of common skate being captured. One notable recapture was a fish which had originally been tagged in October 1985 and which turned up in exactly the same spot some 9 years later, in 1994! Skate generally average around the 150lbs (68kgs) but many fish of over this weight are caught annually.

Mullet, to over the specimen weight of 5lbs (2.27kg), are taken fairly regularly at the outflow from **Lough Furnace (4)**. Sweet corn or bread flake are generally the most successful float fished or free lined baits, while fly fishing is growing in popularity and presents an even greater sporting challenge. The majority of specimen fish have been taken in the month of August. Lough Furnace and its tributaries are under the management of the Marine Institute, Furnace, Newport and permission to fish should be sought before commencing.

Where the Owengarve River crosses the beach at **Rossturk (A)** lugworm, clam and some white ragworm can be dug on the channel banks at low tide.

There is a tidal slipway beside the Pier at **Mullranny (5)**, which dries at low water. Boat fishing in the Bay offers exceptional sport at times for ray and occasional common skate while to the west, the mixed ground offshore from the Corraun Peninsula provides a wide range of species, including pollack, codling, coalfish, wrasse, dabs and gurnard.

Pier fishing at high water is for wrasse, coalfish, dogfish and dabs and occasional triggerfish and sea trout, while on a flooding tide the beach yields dabs, dogfish, turbot and occasional ray and bass. Sandeel and mackerel strip are the best baits at Mullranny.

Sandeel can be dug on the bank of the channel **(B)** at low tide.

There are several rock-fishing stations below the 8 miles (4.97km) long coast road between Mullranny and Corraun **(6)**. The ground is very mixed, ranging from shallow weed covered rock, through deep kelp fringed gullies to sandy hollows and depressions. Spinning in deep water accounts for pollack and mackerel, while bottom fishing produces wrasse, conger, rockling, dogfish, bull huss and ray. In summer, at least one of the Newport vessels operates from Corraun Quay offering superb species fishing in and around Deacy's Rock, Achillbeg and along the southern shore of Achill Island. Species available here include cod, haddock, whiting, dab, plaice, turbot, ray, pollack, coalfish, ling, cuckoo and ballan wrasse, all the gurnards etc.

At **Corraun (C)**, lugworm can be dug in the west-facing bay opposite Cloghmore.

Achill is the largest island off the Irish coast, and is connected to the mainland by a road bridge which carries the R139 across Achill Sound. The island is roughly triangular in shape and 15.5 miles (25km) across. There is a long tradition of boat angling and big fish catches, dating back to the early 1900's. Some of the most significant, pioneering research of deep water, big game fishing took place there, during this period. In 1932 Dr. O'Donel-Brown took a porbeagle shark of 365lbs (165.5kg), off Keem Bay, which at the time was not only an Irish record but also the biggest porbeagle shark ever taken on rod and line in European waters. Then, in 1959, Mr. J. McMonagle caught a record blue shark of 206 lbs (93.4kg) off Achill Head. In 1973, a magnificent Irish and European Record tub gurnard of 12.25lbs (5.67kg) was boated at Bullsmouth by Robert Seaman and, in 2002, a huge electric ray of 88lbs (40kg) was caught by Shay Boylan while boat fishing in shallow water on the southern shore. Many other fine fish have been taken in the area over the years including ling to 28.5lbs (12.93kg), pollack to 14.25lbs (6.4kg), pouting to 3.25lbs (1.47kg), red bream to 5.75lbs (2.61kg) and common skate to 173lbs (78.47kg).

Fast tides and dangerous currents in Achill Sound mean fishing can be very difficult and possibly dangerous on springs. As a result bottom fishing from the pier at **Cloghmore (7)** is almost impossible except on slack water

at low or high tide when dogfish, dabs and flounder are available. Mackerel occasionally shoal in the fast water just offshore, between the Castle and pier and spinning or jigging small Sabiki type feathers can prove very productive.

The 4 mile (6.44km) stretch of coastline between Cloghmore and Doega, known as Atlantic Drive **(8)**, is one of the most awe-inspiring pieces of scenery on the entire west coast. The road, which is exposed to the prevailing elements, clings to the top of high sea cliffs and doubles back on itself in several places as it corkscrews across the precipitous hillside.

About halfway along the drive, a small track leads down to a number of rock outcrops. Float fishing and spinning there will produce pollack, coalfish, wrasse and occasional garfish. Bottom fishing will account for dogfish, rockling, conger and bull huss. The ground is generally rocky and very weedy, making tackle losses almost unavoidable. The use of light line "rotten bottom" between the main line and lead will help reduce the loss. There are probably more angling vantage points waiting to be discovered, particularly on the eastern side of Doega Head. The potential for really exciting shore angling exists there and the angler who is prepared to put in time and effort seeking it out should be well rewarded. Great care and common sense should be exercised at all times due to the exposed nature of the area. Visitors are advised not to approach the shoreline in heavy sea swells, or in rain, as the rocks become treacherous in these conditions and a slip could prove fatal. Even in dry conditions, it is recommended that footwear with good grip should be worn.

Just before the village of Keel, there is a turn off the R319, which leads past a caravan park and golf course down to **Keel Strand (9)**. During daylight, in summer, there are virtually no fishing opportunities on this very popular blue flag beach. Most of the possibilities, therefore, exist either at night or in spring or autumn when the hordes of holidaymakers are absent. For best results, strong surf is generally required, particularly at the outflow of Gallagher's Stream where turbot, dab, flounder, plaice, dogfish and occasional ray can be caught. At times, this beach also produces quality fishing for sea trout and fish to over 14lbs (6.34kg) have been taken there on sandeel baits.

About halfway between the villages of Keel and Dooagh, a narrow road runs down to the little harbour of **Purteen (10)** from where most of the boat fishing in the area takes place, and where much of the island's angling tradition is centred. A registered sea angling boat normally operates from there during the summer months, fishing for the forty or so species that have been recorded from marks such as the Mweelaun Rocks, Moyteoge Point, Achill Head and the Bills Rocks. There is a slipway in the harbour which is usable for most of the tide and where small boats can be safely launched. There is also ample parking space for tow vehicles and trailers to the west of the pier. The harbour

holds good shoals of big mullet in summer with fish to over 6lbs (2.72kg) possible on bread flake. From the outer wall, conger to over 50lbs (22.68kg), and ballan wrasse to over 6lbs (2.72kg) have been caught. Those anglers who enjoy 'scratching' for mini species, will find corkwing wrasse, tompot blenny, shanny, small whiting and rockling along the west wall of the harbour.

As the R319 runs west of Dooagh it begins to climb around the side of Croaghnaun Mountain. Just before the turn off to Lough Acorrymore there is a track on the other side of the road, which leads down the hillside to the sheltered **Rusheen Cove (11)**. Spinning from the rocks produces pollack to over 5lbs (2.27kg) and mackerel. Float fished worm baits attract coalfish to 2lbs (.91kg) and wrasse to 4lbs (1.8kg) while bottom baits should catch dogfish to 2lbs (.91kg) and conger to 15lb (6.8kg).

Where the R319 reaches its highest point, there is a stunning view over **Keem Bay (12)** many hundreds of feet below. Steep, heather covered mountain slopes, plunge down to the crescent of golden sand lapped by aquamarine water of crystalline quality. This is, without doubt, the most beautiful beach on the island and, despite being quite small - it is just over 300 yards (.50km) long at low tide - it has been awarded a blue flag. Like all the other local beaches, Keem can get very crowded during the months of June, July and August but, on its day, is also capable of providing some of the best beach fishing in County Mayo. It was once thought that autumn was the best time to fish on Keem Strand but, as more anglers "discovered" it, so opinions seemed to change and the months of April and May came into favour. Whatever the preference, just being there to enjoy the magnificent scenery satisfies the majority of anglers. To catch fish, a flooding tide is the best time. Distance casting, 150 yards+ (137 metres), with lugworm, ragworm, sandeels and squid strip will produce codling, dogfish and plaice to 3lbs (1.36kg), dab to 1.25lbs (.57kgs) and occasional thornback ray to 6lbs (2.76kg). Fishing close to the rock, on the western side, yields wrasse to 4lbs (1.81kg) and coalfish to 2lbs (.91kg). Baits fished within the 40 yard (36.6 metres) range will yield small turbot and flounder to 2lb (.91kg). Keem Strand has also the ability to turn up unexpected species with homelyn ray, black sole and triggerfish also recorded. Small boat fishing in the bay has yielded trigger fish, red, grey and tub gurnard, dabs, codling and pollack.

Situated on the northern shore of Achill is **Doogort (13)**, which has yet another blue flag beach and is also a popular holiday location in summer. To the north west of the beach, a quay and tidal slipway are located and, from there, small boats can be launched to fish the mainly shallow, sandy grounds on the southern side of Blacksod Bay, and east to Bullsmouth, for ray (homelyn and thornback), tope, spurdog, dogfish, bull huss, gurnard and dabs. Access to the quay is very restricted and care should be taken when parking trailers to avoid causing an obstruction. The ground off the end of the quay is mainly



rock and weed falling off to sand at about 60 yards (54.86 metres). This mixed sea bed offers a wide range of species to try for and although there are few big fish to be caught, there is more than enough action to satisfy even the most discerning angler. Species available include ballan and corkwing wrasse, dab, flounder, plaice, dogfish, pollack, coalfish and mackerel.

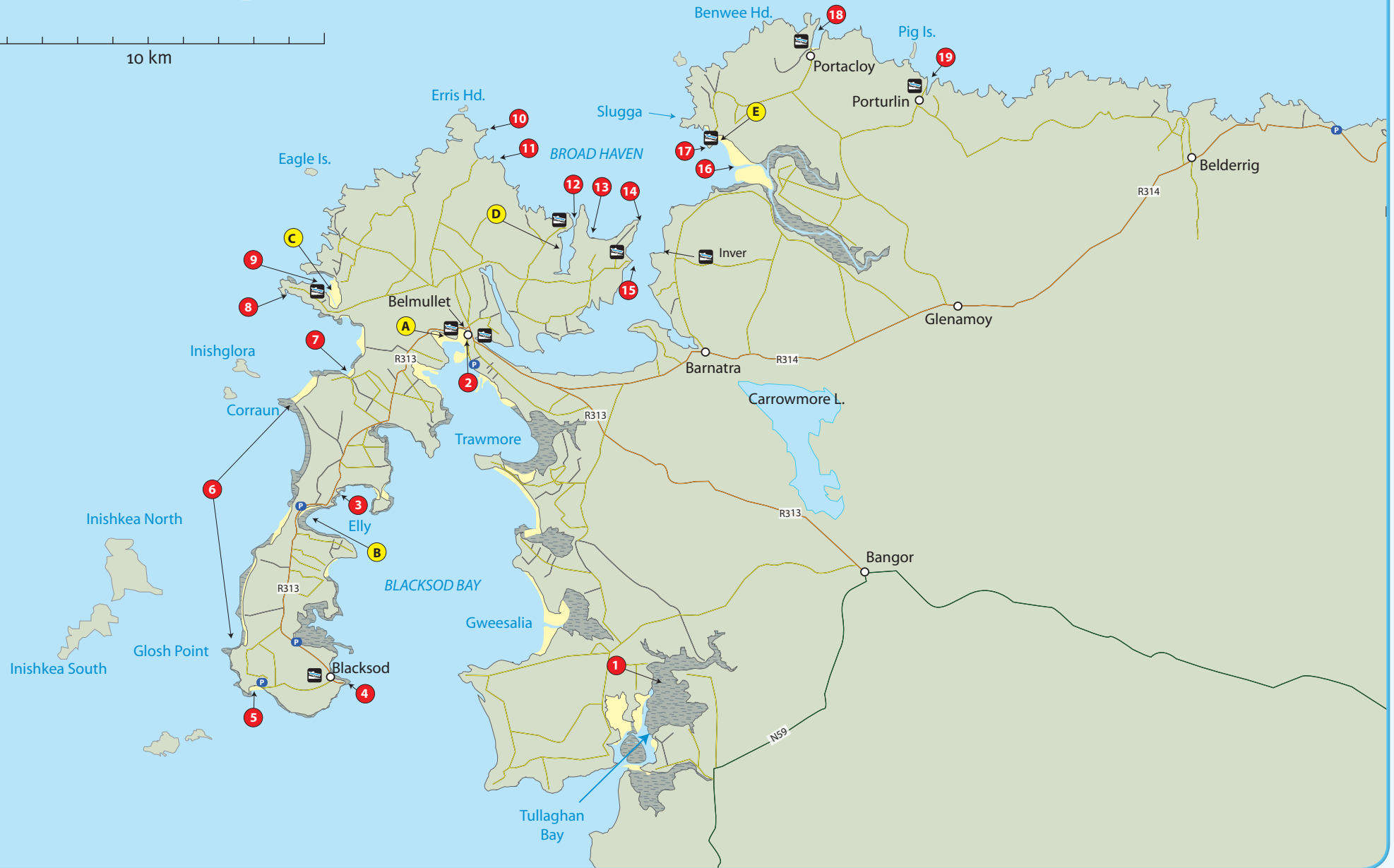
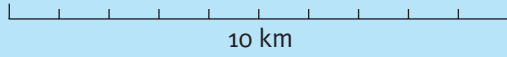
At **Bunacurry (D)**, soft and peeler crab can be collected below the seaweed at low tide; mussel can also be gathered from the rock outcrops while lugworm can be dug on the mudflats.

There are other beach and rock marks on Achill Island, particularly on the northern side, which appear to offer considerable fishing opportunities but difficulties with access between Saddle Head and Slievemore have deterred many anglers over the years. There are, however, ways to get down to the deepwater shoreline, all of which involve long, sometimes, arduous walks with steep descents. These venues are not for the faint hearted but a handful of anglers are now investigating the possibilities in the area and who knows what they will uncover?

Tides at Inishraher Island (Clew Bay) are +6.00 hrs on Dublin times.

Map 2

Belmullet & Erris



Map 2: Belmullet and the Erris Region

On the eastern shores of Blacksod Bay (to the southeast of Belmullet) there are several sandy estuaries where flounder, dogfish, sea trout, turbot and bass have all been recorded, but shore fishing is seldom practised and little is known of the fishing locally. The largest of these estuaries is at **Tullaghan (1)** where the Owenmore River enters the sea. The two smaller bays to the north at Gweesalia and Tramore are also worthy of note. There are obvious opportunities there for further exploration. On a cautionary note, most of the eastern inshore waters are home to large numbers of lesser weever (*Trachinus vipera*) which can inflict a nasty sting, occasionally leading to hospitalisation. Caution should, therefore, be exercised when handling these fish.

The town of **Belmullet (2)**, which is almost as far west as one can go in Ireland, lies between the large Bays of Blacksod to the south and Broadhaven to the north. The town is the capital of the Barony of Erris and is regarded by many anglers as offering the greatest variety of sea fish anywhere in Ireland. This is borne out by the fact that over 45 species have been recorded there. Many Irish Records were established in the area but two that remain are James Prescott's red gurnard of 3lbs 9.5ozs (1.63kg), in 1968, and Frank Brogan's 156lb (70.76kgs) halibut taken in 1972. Local records show something of the quality of fishing available and include coalfish to 22.25lbs (10.09kgs), dab to 1.72lbs (.780kgs), grey gurnard to 2.24lbs (1.02kg), haddock to 7.90lbs (3.58kgs), mackerel to 2.90lbs (1.31kgs), monkfish to 51lbs (23.13kgs), tope to 52lbs (23.59kgs), torsk to 6.28lbs (2.85kgs), turbot to 32.50lbs (14.74kgs), whiting to 3.80lbs (1.72kgs) and cuckoo wrasse to 1.45lbs (.660kg). Virtually all of these species were taken while boat fishing, but shore fishing in the area is also of a high standard and very varied.

Blacksod and Broadhaven Bays are connected by a narrow tidal channel in the town and grey mullet to over 6lbs (2.7kg) have been taken there by freelining, floatfishing and on fly fishing equipment. Small rockling and flounder to over 2lbs (.907kg) are also known to inhabit the area.

Below the old pump house, on the Blacksod Road (R313), in Belmullet, and south to the creamery below **Carne (A)**, lugworm and clam are plentiful and high enough on the beach to allow digging to take place after the first two hours of an ebbing tide.

Further south on the R313 a narrow bridge crosses the main outflow from Leam Lough. This area of water, which is known locally as the **Gaisce (3)** is a narrow saltwater channel, which runs from the sea into Leam Lough. Loosely translated, "Gaisce" means 'active' or 'fast'. This is an apt description because the stream rushes in a torrent through the narrows. Several deep holes have formed, which hold mullet, sea trout, flounder, immature pollack, coalfish,



ballan wrasse and corkwing wrasse. Fishing from the bridge or along the southern side of the channel affords most comfortable access. Care should be exercised, however, as this road can carry surprisingly heavy volumes of traffic at times.

The beach at **Elly Bay (B)** is very popular with swimmers and is too shallow to provide any worthwhile opportunities for shore angling but, just below the car park, is an excellent bait digging area for lugworm and small white ragworm. Sandeel will occasionally show up when digging in summer along the low tide line.

Small boats can be launched from the slipway at **Blacksod (4)** where registered charter boats are also available on a full time basis, offering sheltered fishing in Blacksod Bay for tope, thornback and homelyn ray, bull huss, dab, dogfish and occasional spurdog and monkfish. Fishing is best in the inner portion of the bay from late April to the end of June when the shoals of male tope in the 25lb to 35lb (11.34kg to 15.88kg) range, are running up the main channel, around Claggan Point and into the shallows at the top of the bay. Boat fishing outside the Bay, generally doesn't get underway until May when the weather begins to settle.



Some of the better known marks outside the bay lie 5 miles (8.05km) to the south of Blacksod and off the northern shore of Achill Island. Best known are Annagh Bay, Saddle Head and Achill Head where megrim, tub and red gurnard, trigger fish, pollack, cod, coalfish, ling and blue shark have been recorded. The Black Rock lies 12 miles (9.31kms) south west of Blacksod Point and the reefs there can, on their day, produce superb fishing for pollack, ling, coalfish and cod. Fishing on the drift is the tried and tested method using artificial lures such as pirks, redgill eels (black or orange are favourites), jellyworm and flashfoil shads. Luminous lures such as Hoikoi or Devil Rigs, baited with mackerel strip, squid or bunches of worms will add to the variety of fish caught. Before conservation became a byword for sea angling in Ireland, hauls of over 2000lbs (907kg) were a fairly regular occurrence on the Black Rock grounds but now the vast majority of fish caught are returned alive to the water.

Three miles off the western side of the peninsula are the islands of Inishkea North and South. The Inishkeas had a thriving fishing community up until 1927 when a tragic fishing accident claimed the lives of ten men. This disaster

precipitated calls for the remaining population to be removed from the islands and, very soon after, the Inishkeas were abandoned.

There is excellent reef fishing all round the islands and good clean ground fishing for turbot, plaice, dab and ray on the southern side of the north island.

To the west of Blacksod, is the south facing beach of **Fallmore (5)**. The beach fishes best when the surf is running and bass, flounder, and sea trout can be taken. During calm spells, particularly at night there are opportunities for ray, dogfish, bull huss and even an occasional tope. On the Atlantic side of the Mullet Peninsula, there is a 6 mile (9.65km) stretch of beach interspersed with several rocky outcrops, between Glosh Point and **Corraun Point (6)**. Fishing along this stretch is for flounder, dab, dogfish, small turbot, occasional ray, sea trout and bass. There are several access points to the beach, one of which is signposted from the R313 opposite Elly Bay. Unfortunately, anglers have to contend with surfers during daylight for most of the summer but night fishing on suitable flood tides should yield rich rewards as sea trout to 9lbs (4.08kgs) and flounder to 2lbs (.91kg) have been taken there.

From the R313, in the village of Bingamstown, a signpost indicates the turning for **Cross Strand (7)** where bottom fishing in the surf accounts for flounder, sea trout, dogfish, turbot and occasional bass, ray and bull huss. The majority of these species appear to be more abundant on the beach after dark, particularly on a flooding tide. Sandeel and mackerel strips are the best bait, by far, on this beach.

The two mile long, northwest facing **Annagh Head (8)** is a popular rock angling location situated about 5 miles west of Belmullet town. Mackerel often shoal close to the Head in summer, and local anglers enjoy spinning for them in the long evenings. Pollack up to 8lbs (3.63kg) will occasionally be taken, giving a very good account of themselves on the light mackerel fishing outfits. Float fishing produces wrasse and coalfish while baits fished on the bottom will find conger, bull huss, rockling and dogfish. The ground all round Annagh is very foul and tackle losses are almost certain; however as distance casting is of no advantage there, old spark plugs attached to the mainline by a paperclip will act perfectly well as disposable sinkers.

Huge sea swells are generated during south or southwest gales and the fishing marks at Annagh become very dangerous. The rocks at Annagh Head should, therefore never be approached in these circumstances. Several lives have been lost there and an angler swept off the rocks in stormy conditions would have virtually no chance of surviving.

On the northern side of Annagh Head, there is a pier and slipway at **Frenchport (9)**. From there, small boats can be launched to fish around Inishglora Island to the south and Eagle Island in the north. Over the years, the local sea angling club have organised occasional boat trips from there and recorded excellent

catches of ling, whiting, haddock, pollack, wrasse, coalfish, turbot, cod, ray etc. At the time of publishing this guide, there is no charter boat in this area and, as a result, there is little boat angling activity. This is also one of the nearest parts of the Irish coast to the deep water beyond the 50 fathom line and the possibilities are almost endless, because anything could turn up. If ever a place was crying out for more angling activity, this must be it. Lugworm can be dug on the beach to the east of the pier in **Frenchport Bay (C)**, while crab can be collected among the weed-covered boulders below the road.

The area of reed bed and marsh at the eastern side of the beach, which surround the outflow from Termoncarragh Lake, is an important breeding ground for several rare species of birds and anglers are requested to bear this in mind when digging bait or walking in the vicinity.

The northern most point of the Mullet Peninsula is **Erris Head (10)**, which can be reached by taking a 2 mile (3.22km) walk, over the steep hillside to the northwest of the car park at Glenlara. This is one of the most productive and exciting local shore angling marks but requires a fair level of fitness, stout walking shoes with good grip, and a backpack for tackle and food! These are all essentials and great care is required on the steep descent and the return climb is strenuous, requiring both hand and foot holds. Fishing is concentrated mainly on the eastern side of the headland where spinning and float fishing will yield pollack to 9lbs (4.08kgs), ballan wrasse to 4lbs (1.81kg) coalfish and mackerel. Bottom fishing will turn up conger and ling to 10lbs (4.54kg), gurnard, whiting, dab, turbot, dogfish and rockling. Erris Head can be a very dangerous location, even in calm, sunny weather, but the journey should never be attempted in wet conditions or when an onshore wind is pushing waves up onto the rock face. No matter what the weather, fishing there should never be attempted on one's own.

A half-mile walk to the east of the car park at **Glenlara (11)**, will lead to a single north facing finger of rock. On the western side of the rock, spinning accounts for pollack and mackerel while float fishing will yield wrasse and coalfish. Bottom fishing will produce strap conger to 12lbs (5.44kg), rockling to 1.5lb (.68kg) and dogfish to 3lb (1.36kg). A lot of patience and a fair modicum of good luck will also be required to prise fish away from the very foul bottom. The best time to fish there is two hours either side of high water.

Spinning at the narrow entrance of the almost land locked **Blind Harbour (12)** will account for pollack to over 6lbs (2.72kg), mackerel and occasional sea trout on a flooding tide. Bottom fishing over sand from the quay will yield dabs and flounder at high water. The slipway is tidal but small boats can be launched for three hours either side of high water. This is the most convenient launching place for exploring some of the best fishing grounds on Broadhaven Bay and the fish rich waters at Erris Head are less than 4 miles (6.44km) away.





A great variety of species have been caught there, including some of the less common ones such as brill, homelyn ray, megrim and John Dory.

To the west of Blind Harbour, a road runs from the Belmullet/Ballyglass Road for about a mile (1.61km) along the shore of the **Harbour Estuary (D)**. Below this road, lugworm can be dug, in quantity, while occasional clam and white ragworm can also be taken. Trench digging is the effective method. At the end of the road, a short walk over a grassy hillock will lead to the charming **Pollacappul Strand (13)**. The beach is only 50 yards (45.7m) long but is blessed with pristine golden sand, washed by a pellucid sea of deep blue. The beach can be fished at any time, day or night, and it is a rare occurrence to find other people there. In bright weather, fishing tends to be slow so night tides are the better option. Flounder and small turbot will be taken close to the beach through low water and on the first few hours of the flood tide. In surf conditions, a sandeel fished into the breakers may tempt a sea trout while distance casting at high water will

produce thornback ray, occasional homelyn ray, larger turbot, dabs, plaice and dogfish. Spinning from the rocks to the west of the beach can be excellent for pollack and mackerel, particularly at dusk. The lands surrounding the beach are all privately owned and permission to cross them may be required.

Anglers are asked not to block gateways or leave gates open and should only cross fences at styles or designated crossing points.

At the western entrance to Inner Broadhaven is **Ballyglass Lighthouse (14)**, which was first switched on in 1855 and is now fully automatic. The beam from the lighthouse shows white to seaward and red to the west to steer vessels clear of sunken rocks on the western side of the point. From the rocks below the lighthouse wall, conger to 20lbs (9.10kg), wrasse to 4lbs (1.81kg), pollack to 6lbs (2.72kg), mackerel, coalfish and pouting can all be taken in summer. Care should be taken on the northern side of the lighthouse as the only path is very narrow and runs along the top of a deep ravine. This area is dangerous in easterly winds over force five as waves will be pushed onto the rock in these conditions.

About a mile (1.61km) south of the Lighthouse is **Ballyglass Pier (15)** which is the main harbour and landing facility on the Mullet Peninsula and base for a state of the art lifeboat station and lifeboat.

There are two slipways from which small boats can be launched to fish Inner Broadhaven Bay, nearby Rossport Bay and up to 5 miles (8.04km) north, where the productive and little fished Kidd Island grounds have much to offer. Species to be expected include ray, turbot, plaice, dabs, red, grey and tub gurnard over sand while pollack, coalfish, wrasse, ling and conger can be taken over rock and cod, pouting, megrim, haddock and whiting over mixed ground. A large number of species have also been recorded from the pier by shore anglers. Casting from the pier head, over sand will produce flounder, plaice, dab, turbot, ray, codling, whiting and dogfish. Fishing tight to the pillars of the pier, with large baits, will attract conger to 20lbs (9.07kg), while grey mullet to over the specimen weight of 5lbs (2.27kg) have been taken on free-lined pieces of mackerel or bread. Float fishing with small baits attracts an array of mini species such as poor cod, corkwing wrasse and tompot blenny.

About 3.5 miles (5.63km) north of Barnatra, on the R314, the estuaries of the Glenamoy and the much smaller Gweedaney Rivers come together in **Rossport Bay (16)**. From the pier in Rossport, or from the sandbanks opposite, spinning with long, silver eel-like lures (Jensen, Tobys, German sprat etc) will attract sea trout and occasional bass. Casting a plug across the tide and slowly retrieving is also an extremely effective way of taking bass from two hours after low water to high tide. Flounders are also available on sandeel or lugworm baits fished on the bottom. As much of the fishing in Rossport Bay necessitates standing in water, which is often more than knee deep, and involves the crossing of channels from bank to bank, chest waders are essential.

At **Rinroe Point (17)** and the beach immediately to the north, the last hour of an ebb tide and the first two hours of the flood are the key periods for spinning and bottom fishing. Sea trout, bass and flounder are the main quarry.

To the east of the **Rinroe Pier (E)**, lugworm and sandeel can be dug. Peeler crab can be collected, in springtime, from below the weed and around the rocks.

Portacloy Bay (18) is, without doubt, the top shore angling mark in the area. Fishing is carried out on the western side of the bay along the half-mile (.8 km) stretch from the piers and steep shore to the point. Bottom fishing and spinning has produced an astonishing 16 species including ray, turbot, plaice, dab, flounder, coalfish, codling, pollack, red gurnard, dogfish, ballan wrasse and mackerel. At the point, fish can be taken from the start of the flood but the piers see very little action until about two hours before high water when fish seem to move into range. This is the consistent pattern of fishing at Portacloy except during periods of heavy rain, or prolonged wet weather, when large amounts of freshwater pour down the hillsides and into the bay. When this occurs, fish cease feeding and it can take several days of dry conditions before they resume. Portacloy is about 8 miles (12.87km) to the northwest of Glenamoy on the R314.

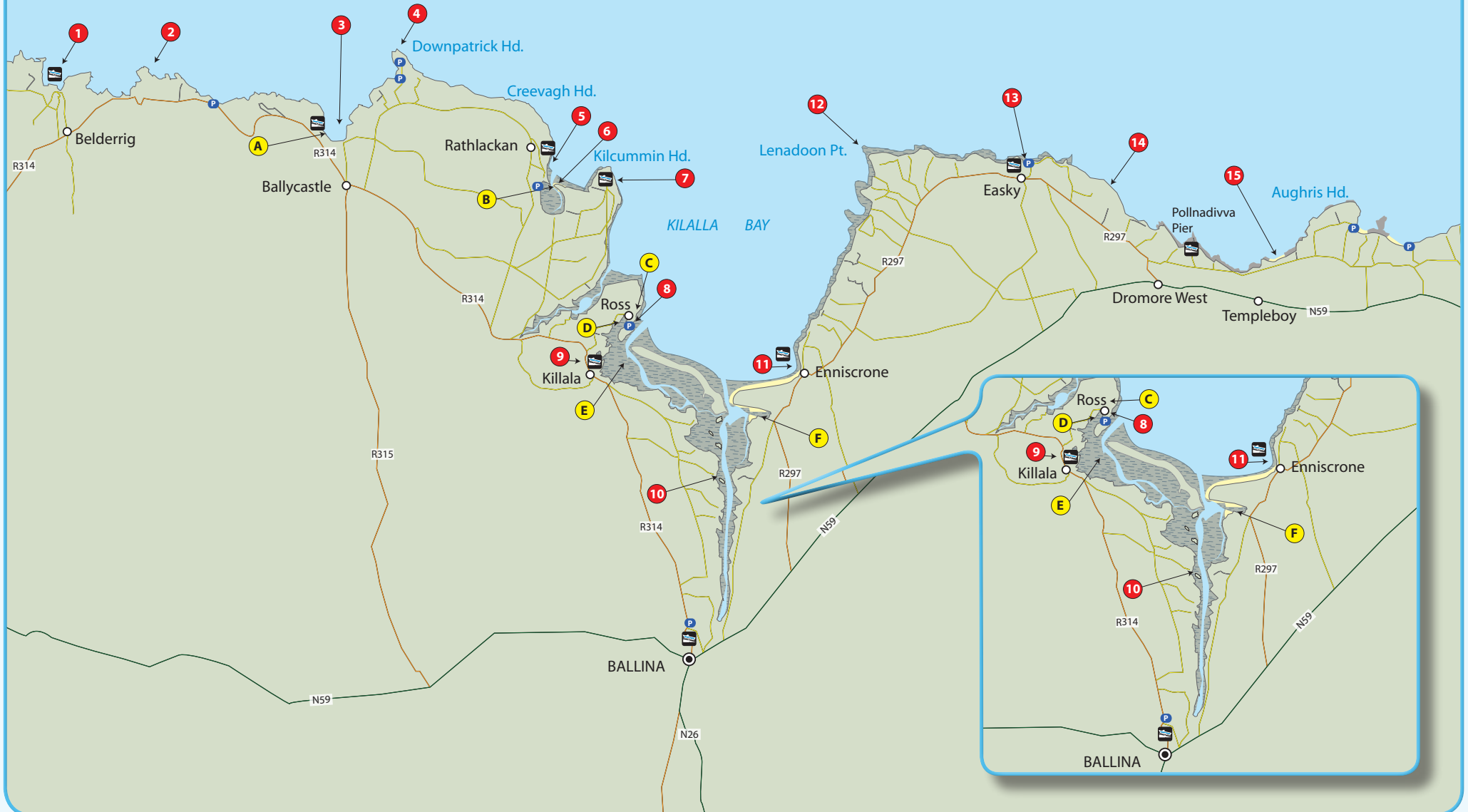
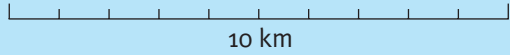
The small commercial harbour of **Porturlin (19)** is about 4 miles (6.44km) to the east of Portacloy and about 6 miles (9.65km) to the north of Glenamoy. The quality of fishing was always highly regarded by anyone who visited Porturlin and there is a long tradition of the local commercial fishermen taking a very keen interest in sport fishing and in catering for anglers. In the past, many successful tournaments were fished from there and up to twenty boats could have been at sea at any given time. However, boats, designed and built for salmon and lobster fishing, could never be deemed ideal for angling and, following new safety regulations, in 2001, the Porturlin fleet could no longer be used. The future of sea angling in this area may lie in small boat fishing. There is a good slipway, which is usable on most tides except low water on extreme spring tides. Fishing is over a wide area between Portacloy and Benwee Head while Pig Island, which is just outside the harbour, and the Stags, which are five pinnacle rocks rising dramatically out of the sea about 1.5 miles (2.5km) from the nearest land, offer boundless opportunities. With over forty species to fish for, the potential for small boat angling at Porturlin is obvious.

Tides at Belmullet are + 6 hours on Dublin times.



Map 3

Killala & North Mayo



Map 3 : Killala Bay and North Mayo

From the tiny harbour at **Belderrig (1)**, small boats can be launched to fish the productive waters of the North Mayo coast around Horse Island and Carrigneill. Pollack, coalfish, cod, whiting, all the gurnards, dabs, dogfish and wrasse are the more common species. Hoi Koi lures, Devil Rigs or Black Widow feathers, baited with mackerel, squid strip or lugworm are just some of the successful attractors in the area. On shore, the pier and rocks to the west offer spinning and floatfishing for pollack, coalfish and wrasse while bottom fished baits will turn up conger, dogfish and occasional huss.

About a mile (as the crow flies) north of the R314, and two miles to the west of the Ceide Fields Visitor Centre, is the site of an old promontory fort. Immediately to the north are several accessible rock platforms known as the **Port Rocks (2)** from which spinning and jigging can be exceptional for pollack, mackerel and garfish. Float fishing yields similar species with the addition of wrasse and coalfish while bottom fishing turns up conger, dogfish and huss. The walk from the road is very much “up hill and down dale” and anglers are advised to travel as lightly as possible. These lands are privately owned and care should be taken by sticking to the sheep tracks and closing gates where necessary.

Just as the R314 veers away from the coast, it passes to the south of **Ballycastle Bay (3)**. Beach fishing on a flooding tide, to high water, produces flounder, dab, occasional plaice and dogfish. The most productive spots are at the mouth of the Ballinglen River, to the west of the reef, and below the car park. Generally evening tides in autumn offer optimum possibilities, with low water and first two hours of the flood being the best period.

Below the car park **(A)**, some lugworm are available on the foreshore and, in spring time, crab can be collected in the weed beside the reef.

From the main street of Ballycastle village, a signpost shows the way via a narrow country road to the breathtaking cliffs of **Downpatrick Head (4)** and the adjacent fulmer and kittiwake colony atop the sea stack of Dun Briste. There is excellent fishing here for pollack, mackerel and wrasse but it is a difficult and very dangerous place to fish. What amounts to cliff fishing is practised by some visitors to the area but this requires a strong head for heights and sturdy shock leader, to lift fish up the cliff face from the sea. Caution is very strongly advised in this area and angling should only be attempted in the very best weather conditions and, if high winds or rain are forecast, stay clear. Much safer fishing, which is almost as productive, can be found from the shallower rocks on either side of the headland where distance casting will possibly put baits over sandy ground, for dogfish and flatfish.



Boats can be launched at **Lackan Pier (5)** where the slipway dries for about 2 hours at low water on spring tides. Bottom fishing at high water will account for flounder, conger, and dogfish, while spinning yields mackerel and pollack. Float fishing, just over the weed, produces a whole range of species including coalfish, corkwing and ballan wrasse and pouting. There is safe, almost unexploited small boat fishing in Lackan Bay and a good variety of species to aim at. Most of the flatfish family are present and turbot to 6lbs (2.27kg), plaice to 3lbs (1.36kg), dabs to 1lb (.45kg) are most common over sand, where thornback ray to 8lbs (3.63kg) and homelyn ray to 4lbs (1.81kg) are also found. A three-hook ledger rig, employing spoons baited with mackerel and squid strip, works well from a boat slowly drifting over the sandy ground on the Bay. Boat fishing off the rocky margins on either side of the bay at Creevagh Head and Kilcummin Head baited feather lures will account for pollack, cod, coalfish, ling and gurnard. Tub gurnard to over the specimen weight of 5lbs (2.27kg) have also been recorded there. Conger and huss will fall to static baits from an anchored boat off Creevagh Head.

As the R314 tracks south east, and just before a sharp bend at Palmerstown Bridge, on the Cloonaghmore River, a narrow road leads north to **Lackan Estuary (B)** where lugworms are plentiful on the western bank of the channel. Sandeel can also be obtained here by drawing a large blunt knife or billhook in arcs through the damp sand near the channel mouth. This forces the eels to

the surface and speed and dexterity are then required, in order to grab them before they can shoot back into the sand.

To the north of the estuary, is **Lackan Strand (6)** which is backed by dunes containing several ancient burial sites. Immediately below one of these sites, known locally as the “Green Hill”, in the western corner, the beach produces excellent spring time fishing for flounder, dabs, plaice and dogfish. Where the Cloonalaghan River crosses the beach is a hotspot for sea trout in spring and autumn with sandeel being the top bait there. From about mid August to the end of September, the main (eastern) stretch of beach produces ray and turbot appear. Bass will also turn up occasionally when the surf is up after a northerly wind.

There are a number of vantage points from which to fish on **Kilcummin Head (7)**. Best known is a large flat rock formation known locally as ‘The Flags’ where spinning accounts for pollack, mackerel and coalfish. Floatfishing offers superb sport for wrasse, especially in the numerous weedy gullies. Access is not easy but there is a rough track just north of Kilcummin village.

About a mile north of Killala, on the R314, there is a turn off which, after some two miles (3.22km), leads to the shore at **Ross (8)**, on the western side of the Killala Bar. There is a very strong tide run in the channel but, at slack water on high tide, bottom fishing will turn up dogfish, flounder and freshwater eel. Night fishing has also been rewarded with occasional conger to 30lbs (13.6kg). Spinning can be carried out throughout the tide and will often produce sea trout to 4lbs (1.81kg). Plug fishing on a flooding tide has also turned up occasional bass to 5lbs (2.27kg).

In the estuarine backwater, just before the car park on **Rinnaun Point (C)**, and in the **Estuary (D)**, lugworm can be dug in large numbers, although they are mainly small.

Killala Bay is 6.75 miles (10.86km) across at the widest point and offers some of the best general sea fishing on the west coast. Charter vessels have operated successfully from **Killala (9)** for almost 50 years and up to forty species have been recorded by boat anglers there. Catches include Irish records for John Dory of 7.5lb (3.4kg), by Cleona Walkin, in 1984, and Megrim of just over 4lbs (1.85kg) by Paul Hennigan in 1987. Other fish of note from the area include spurdog of 15.75lbs (7.14kg), flounder of 4.20lb (1.90kg), blonde ray of 26.75lbs (12.13kg) cuckoo ray of 4.70lbs (2.13kg), thornback ray of 25.5lbs (11.57kg) and white skate of 173lbs (78.47kg). Blue shark fishing is popular on the bay in the months of July, August and September and, every year, fish of over 100lbs (45.36kg) are reported.

To the southeast of Killala, the channel dissects the bay as it runs between Bartraigh Island and the mainland just west of **Moyne Abbey (E)**. From the southern side of this channel, digging at low water, will produce quality

lugworm and clam while crab can be gathered in the weed along the rocky margins in spring.

An almost unique type of fishing is practiced from small boats in the **River Moy Estuary (10)** which is just north of the town of Ballina. There, sandeel or mackerel strip is freelined or ledged from a drifting boat for sea trout to 4lbs (1.81kg). Fly fishing in the brackish water has also been successfully tried and has gained a faithful following. Occasionally, during summer, large numbers of mackerel chase shoals of sandeel over the bar and up the main river channel. Anything that looks remotely like a sandeel will catch mackerel during these incursions. In fact, when this happens, anglers report mackerel taking bare hooks! Fly fishing for sea trout on the estuary has become increasingly popular in recent years and can provide very lively sport. Other available species in the estuary are flounder, dab and coalfish but little fishing is carried out deliberately for these species. Boats can be launched from the slipway opposite the Crockets Bar and Restaurant at the Quay in Ballina.

Just west of where the shore road meets the R297 road, at **Scurmore (F)**, lugworm and clam can be dug in the estuary at low tide.

The popular holiday town of **Enniscrone (11)** is situated on the R297 about 3 miles (4.84km) from the N59, Ballina-Sligo, Road. The main attraction of the area is the spectacular golden sands of Enniscrone Strand which is backed to the south by high dunes, forming a natural setting for one of the top championship golf links in the country.

The 2.5 mile (4km) long beach faces north and high winds from that quarter put up strong surf over its entire length. On these occasions, the water becomes coloured with disturbed sand and fishing is at its best, with dabs, plaice, flounder, turbot, dogfish and sea trout possible. In the autumn, bass can also be expected and the best fish reported, weighed just over 13.75 lbs (6.24kg). The beach has occasionally been used as a match venue and has provided top class sport on these occasions. Despite the obvious potential of Enniscrone Strand, it does not receive the attention from anglers that it should. There is virtually no night fishing activity on the beach and, therefore, the true extent of the available angling has yet to be realised. The pier also provides good sport at times, with the hours of high water, at night, offering best opportunities. Conger to over 20lbs (9.07kg), have been recorded as have thornback ray to 8lbs (3.63kg) and large numbers of dogfish. In daylight, spinning accounts for pollack and mackerel, while float fishing yields wrasse and coalfish. Very little angling takes place on the pier outside the peak holiday season and, like the strand, has probably much more to offer than is currently appreciated.

On the other hand, the boat fishing locally is well established and many fine fish have been recorded over the years including cod to 36lbs (16.33kg), bull

huss to 19.37lbs (8.79kg), garfish to 2.5lbs (1.13kg), hake to 22.5lbs (10.21kg) and homelyn ray to 6.48lbs (2.9kg). Boats can be launched from the slipway beside the pier on most tides except low water on spring tides. Generally, the marks that are fished from Killala, on the opposite side of the bay, will also attract boats from Enniscrone. A full time charter vessel is based at Enniscrone and can pick up anglers from there or, by arrangement, from Killala.

About 10 miles north of Enniscrone, at the eastern extremity of the bay is **Lenadoon Point (12)**, which provides wrasse, pollack and coalfish over very rough, weedy ground. Float fishing can be attempted in the period about two hours either side of high water. Spinning can, realistically, only be tried at slack water on high tide. Unfortunately, even at these times, anglers will be very lucky not to forfeit at least one set of terminal tackle. The tackle risks are worth taking, however, as pollack to 8lbs (3.63kg) have been recorded there. Tides at Killala Bay are +6.30 hours on Dublin times.

Travelling east along the R297, and through the village of Easky, the first turn to the left leads down a narrow road to **Easky Pier (13)**. Fishing there is best at high tide when wrasse, pollack, coalfish and conger are probable, notably at night in autumn. Like many of the shore fishing venues in this area the ground below water at the quay is extraordinarily rough and tackle losses are almost inevitable.

There are numerous shore fishing vantage points to the north east of the R297 between Easky and Dromore West. The rock ledges around **Carrownabinna (14)** are of particular interest but these most promising positions require considerable walking to reach them. All the expected species, including conger, pollack, coalfish and wrasse are available and, while there appears to be potential for other species, there is little or no angling for them and hard information is not available.

Information is also scant regarding **Trawee Strand (15)**, which lies about 1.5 miles (2.41km) to the north east of Templeboy and the N59. Flatfish and dogfish are fairly common in autumn there, on bottom-fished baits, but there are several instances of monofilament traces being “bitten off” by much bigger fish. These encounters usually take place in late August and September and almost certainly involve tope.

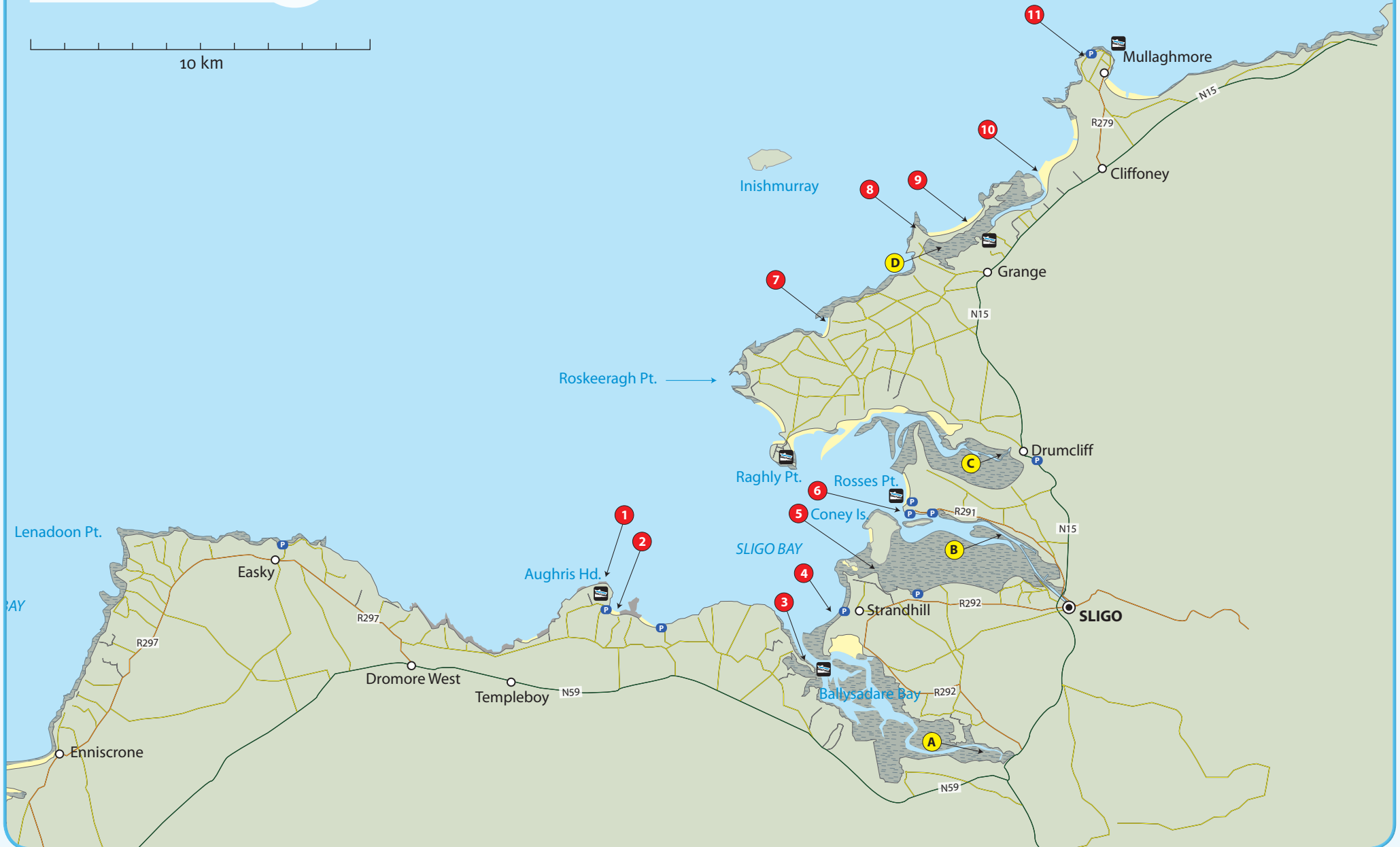


Map 4

Aughris Head
To
Mullaghmore Head



10 km



Map 4 : Aughris Head to Mullaghmore Head

The beach to the south of Pollachurry Pier, on the eastern side of **Aughris Head (1)** provides sport with flounder, dab, dogfish and occasional ray and also experiences an inshore migration of tope during autumn. Tope are also possible from the shore at the nearby **Dunmorán Strand (2)** where flounder and dogfish are fairly common. **Galleyhouse Strand (3)** fishes best on a flooding tide at the onset of darkness. This is the crucial combination for success as fish move through the narrows into Ballysadare Bay. The hotspot appears to be opposite the sandbar off Mussel Point. Dogfish and ray have been recorded and flounder are very plentiful for much of the year as are mullet in hot weather. Sea trout, bass and mackerel will also be caught in summer, on spinners and plugs, during the first few hours of the flood.

Acres of lugworm beds are located at the head of **Ballysadare Bay (A)**, just to the north of the town. Care should be exercised when attempting to dig bait there as the mud is very soft in places. An hour's effort will, however, be well rewarded.

At **Strandhill (4)**, beach fishing in autumn should be rewarded with flounder, plaice, dogfish, small turbot and occasional bass. When the surf is up, this is a popular venue for surfers so angling space can be restricted. The long walk south, away from the car park, and the majority of surfers, may pay dividends on these occasions. From the R292, east of Strandhill, there is a tractor track across Dorrins Strand to **Coney Island (5)**. Fishing into the channel, on the northern side will yield sea trout, mackerel, bass and flatfish while the western facing beach will produce bass and flounder in surf conditions and occasional ray to distance casters during warm, calm spells in summer. Access to the island is only viable at low water.

The town of Sligo is regarded as the gateway to the northwest and is at the confluence of a number of major routes. The town is also a good angling base as it is strategically placed at the mid point of the Sligo coastline with shore fishing available to the west and north. There is excellent game fishing for salmon nearby in the Ballysadare River, while the Garravogue River and Lough Gill have salmon and brown trout with the Drumcliffe River and scenic Glencar Lough having salmon and sea trout. There are also several excellent tackle shops in the town.

Just north of the major junction of the N4, N15 and N16, the R291 veers away in a westerly direction along the north shore of **Sligo Harbour (B)**. About half-way between the junction and Rosses Point are several access places to the foreshore where lugworm can be easily dug.



There are strong currents at **Rosses Point (6)** but spinning or plug fishing, on a flood tide, between there and Deadmans Point, to the west, will produce sea trout, mackerel and occasional bass. As the tide reaches high water, the current slackens allowing baits to be fished on the bottom for between 45 to 70 minutes. This can be a very exciting time to fish there because dogfish, bull huss, ray and tope are all possible. In most seasons, one or two registered charter boats operate from Rosses Point and they experience very consistent fishing on Sligo Bay for tope, ray, spurdog, dogfish and occasional large skate.

The Turbot Bank is approximately eight fathoms (14.63 metres) deep and lies to the north west of the mouth of Ballysadare Bay and provides sport with turbot and thornback ray to over 10lbs (4.54kg) and blonde ray to over 15lbs (6.80kg). Another well-known mark is 'the Ledge' which lies about 4 miles (6.44km) west of Coney Island. It is a large, elongate reef lying in a north-south plane, covered by about 15 fathoms (27.43 metres) with several pinacles reaching up to 5 fathoms (9.14 metres) below the surface. This is a superb pollack fishing area with fish to over 10lbs (4.54kg) regularly taken. Jellyworms, shads and redgills all work well when fished on long flowing trac-

es. Ling, conger, tope and bull huss have also been taken in the vicinity while the area south of 'Wheat Rock' produces common skate to over 150lbs (68kg). There are great opportunities locally for the small boat angler and as this niche of saltwater angling increases in popularity so the fishing on Sligo Bay will be opened up to a wider public.

Tides at Sligo are + 5h 50m on Dublin times.

Below the majestic ramparts of Ben Bulbin Mountain, which rises for over 1,600 feet (500m) above the flat Sligo countryside, the Drumcliff River winds its way across the estuary to **Drumcliff Bay (C)**. South of the village of Carney, about a mile west of the N15, on the northern shore, lugworm and clam are plentiful at low tide and can be dug on the banks of the river channel.

Some 4.5 miles (6kms) north west of Carney is **Cloonagh Bay (7)** where pollack can be taken while spinning from the rocks on the southern shore and flatfish and dogfish over sand on the northern shore. Three miles (5km) to the north east is **Streedagh Point (8)** which consists mainly of large boulders and can only be safely approached for two hours either side of low water. On the northern side of the point, there is excellent spinning for big pollack with fish to over 8lbs (3.73kg) recorded. Float fishing close to the rock turns up ballan and corkwing wrasse in good numbers. Small coalfish will also fall to float fished baits. Dogfish, huss and conger will fall to bottom baits but "rotten bottom" links should be used on leads as the ground is very weedy and rough.

Two miles (3.22km) west of the village of Grange, on the N15, is **Streedagh Strand (9)**. While this is possibly one of the most picturesque beaches on the western coastline, it was the scene for one of the most horrific maritime disasters in Irish history. On the 25th September 1588, three Spanish armada ships, 'La Lavia', 'La Julianna', and 'Santa Maria Vision' were driven ashore in a fierce storm and wrecked on the beach, with the loss of up to 1,100 lives. There is a memorial recalling the incident in the village.

In late summer and autumn, the beach is an excellent fishing location for flounder, plaice, dab, dogfish and occasional ray. The best fishing there is experienced on a flooding tide at dusk.

The estuary known as **Milkhaven (D)**, which drains the Grange River, runs behind Streedagh in a north easterly direction. The southern end is a good bait digging area, where lugworm, clam and white ragworm are plentiful.

Mullet, flounder and sea trout are common in the channel, particularly where it enters the sea between Dernish Island and **Trawalua Strand (10)**. Free lining sandeel can be very effective for sea trout while casting worm and crab baits into the surf will yield plaice, flounder and the odd bass. **Mullaghmore Head (11)** which lies almost 3 miles (4.83km) due west of the village of Cliffoney has several rock fishing sites where pollack, mackerel, conger and wrasse can

be caught. The best known spot on the Head is probably Darby's Hole where specimen wrasse to 5lbs (2.27kg) have been taken. The rocks here can be dangerous in wet conditions or in big sea swells. Anglers are advised to take great care at all times.

Tides at Mullaghmore Head are +6 hours on Dublin times.



