

PIT tagging skate in the Loch Sunart to the Sound of Jura MPA

Dr Jane Dodd
Operations Officer - Marine





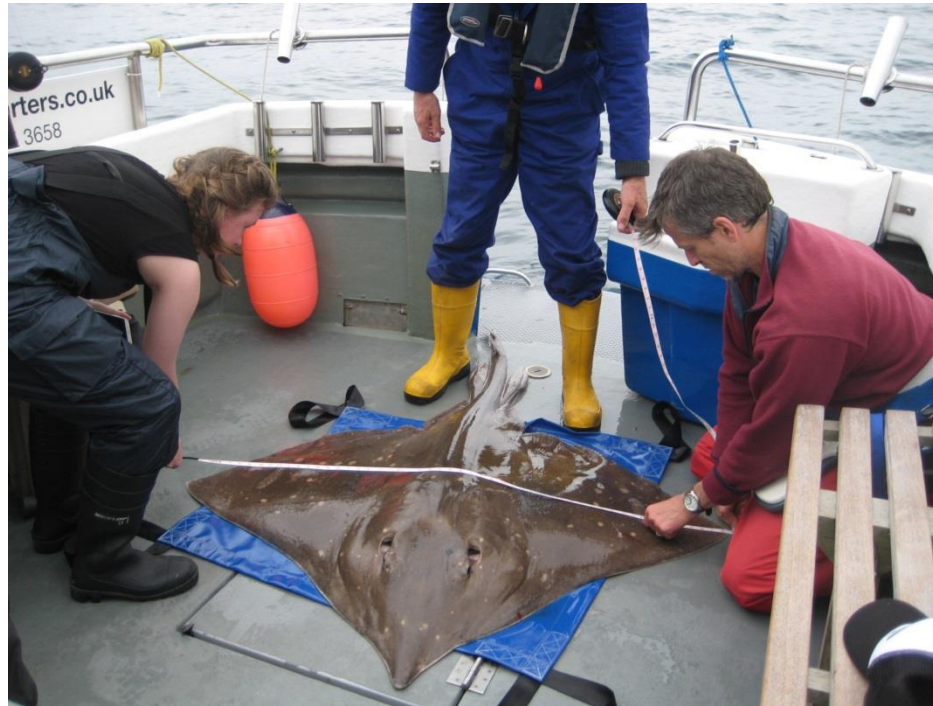
Skate are injected with a tiny Passive Integrated Transponder or PIT tag, just like the ones vets inject into pets for identification





When a skate is captured it is scanned for a PIT tag using a scanner





If a tag is found the number is recorded and the fish is measured and photographed and released





If no tag is found the fish is tagged, scanned again to record the PIT tag number, measured and released



The scanner stores the date and time the fish was tagged which is a useful double check on the data that the Skippers record for us but we rely on the skippers to record the position at which the fish was caught and the size and sex of the fish. I take the datasheets and the scanners back about every month and swap them for new scanners, and then I spend some time adding the data to our giant spreadsheet.



As of September 2017, thanks to our Skippers, we have recorded encounters with over 700 skate in the MPA since spring 2016. We have tagged nearly 500 fish and recaptured more than 220 which is a recapture rate of 46% (including multiple recaptures), the number of individual skate recaptured is 24%. We have one fish on 7 recaptures, 1 fish on 6 and 4 fish on 5 recaptures!

We plan to continue the PIT tagging for the foreseeable future at least because it will help us to monitor any changes in the skate population in the MPA. It has also been extremely helpful as a check on the photo ID project by providing a time series of images of individual fish we can definitely identify from their PIT tag number.

