Fisheries Information Notice 11-2023

Identification of Sprat & Herring

AN t-ÚDARÁS UM CHOSAINT IASCAIGH MHARA | SEA-FISHERIES PROTECTION AUTHORITY

The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority has issued a Fisheries Information Notice (FIN) entitled**:**
Identification of Sprat & Herring

Introduction

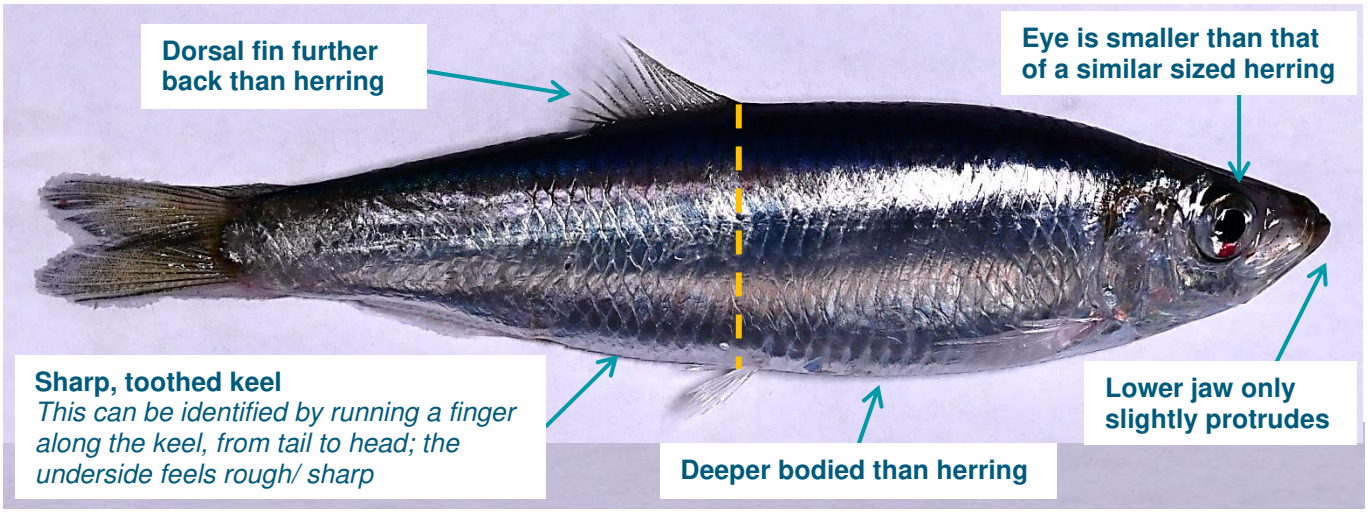
European sprat, *Sprattus sprattus*, and Atlantic herring, *Clupea harengus*, are pelagic schooling fish. Herring and sprat may be misidentified due to their similar appearances.

European sprats are smaller than herring, typically reaching around 13cm in length, whereas Atlantic herring can reach up to 40cm in length. When juvenile, herring are a similar size to mature sprat.

This FIN details the identifying features that can be used to distinguish between Atlantic herring and European sprat.

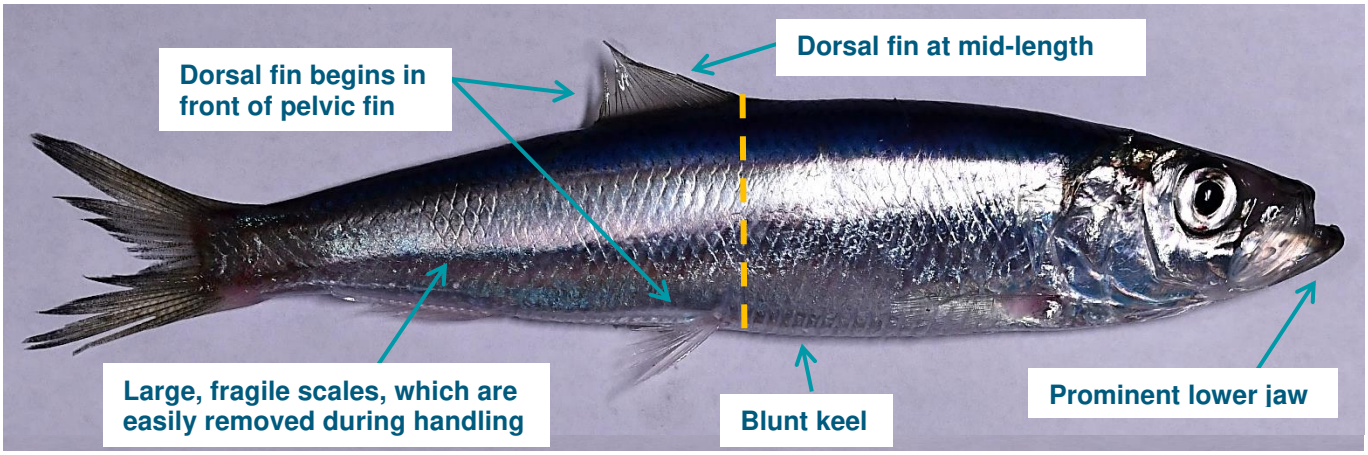
Species Identification

Sprat



Photograph: Marine Institute

Herring



Photograph: Marine Institute

"The purpose of this document is to provide information upon identification of sprat and herring. For the avoidance of doubt, this information does not constitute legal advice or analysis and should not be relied upon as such. Whilst every effort is made to ensure accurate and relevant material is published, no responsibility is accepted by, or on behalf of the SFPA, for any errors, omissions or misleading statements on these pages."

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Figure 1 *European sprat with the pelvic and dorsal fins being pulled outward. Dorsal and pelvic fins are circled. Lines from the origin of the dorsal and pelvic fins show that the dorsal fin begins* ***behind*** *the pelvic fin in sprat.*

Photograph: Bram Couperus (2015).

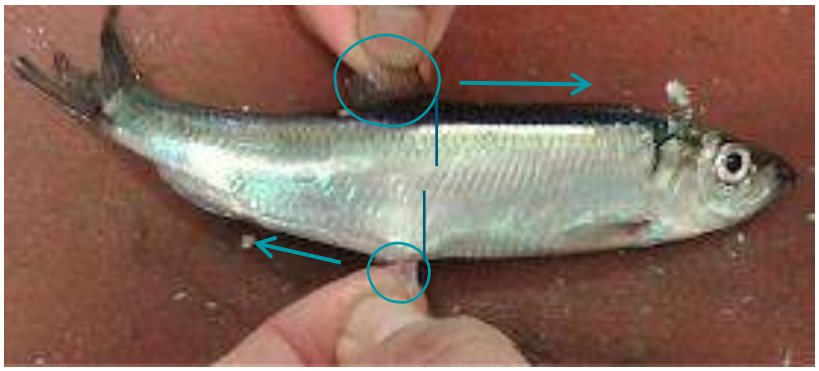

Figure 2 *Juvenile Atlantic herring with the pelvic and dorsal fins being pulled outward. Dorsal and pelvic fins are circled. Lines from the origin of the dorsal and pelvic fins show that the dorsal fin begins* ***in front*** *of the pelvic fin in herring.*

Photograph: Bram Couperus (2015).

Figure 3 *A herring (top) and sprat (bottom). Adult herrings are larger than sprat. The herring has a narrower body, larger eye and more prominent lower jaw compared to the sprat. The dorsal fin is located further forward relative to the pelvic fin in the herring. The sharp keel of the sprat can be determined through handling.*

Photograph: Marine Institute

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