



## Lough Foyle to Lough Swilly

The almost land locked Lough Foyle creates a natural boundary between Co. Derry in Northern Ireland and Donegal in the Republic. The lakes and rivers which form the Foyle catchment fall under the jurisdiction of the Loughs Agency which is a cross border, Government body with a remit to “provide effective management, development, conservation, and promotion of fisheries and marine tourism in Loughs Foyle and Carlingford”.

Below the R238 coast road, north of Muff, in the vicinity of **Quigley's Point (A)** there are patches of lugworm, which can be dug fairly easily, on the foreshore at low tide. Some small harbour ragworm can also be dug in the same area while crab can be found in the weed margins during summer. Spinning from the **Old Pilot Pier (1)** produces mackerel at high water during the summer. Distance casting will yield flounder, dab, dogfish and occasional ray, while ground-baiting beside the jetty will attract mullet. There is an old slipway at the pier which can be used to launch or retrieve small boats two hours either side of high water.

Boats can also be launched at **Moville (2)** where mackerel and mullet can also be caught from the pier, mainly on float fishing tackle. Bottom fishing yields conger, and fish over the specimen weight of 18kg have been recorded. **Greencastle (3)** is a busy commercial fishing port and is also the landing stage for a cross Lough ferry. Pier fishing yields conger to bottom fished baits, particularly at night, while float fishing produces a wide range of species including, wrasse, immature coalfish, mackerel and mullet in summer. There is a slipway in the harbour where small boats can be launched on most stages of the tide.

Inside the narrows between Greencastle and Magilligan Point, the Lough is comparatively shallow with depths seldom exceeding 18 metres at low tide. The main shipping channel hugs the Donegal shoreline and is buoyed for almost its entire length up to the city of Derry.

There is some boat fishing west of McKinney's Bank on the slope running from 10 metres at the Saltpans Buoy down to 18 metres opposite Moville. Bottom fishing over a mixture of sand, shingle and mud will yield dogfish, ray, flounder, dab and occasional plaice. In summer, mackerel shoals enter the Lough and during these periods tope will occasionally be found there. Fishing is usually carried out from an anchored boat, but caution should be exercised at all times as shipping has right of way in the buoyed channel.

To the north east of Greencastle, the rocks below the lighthouse on **Dunagree Point (4)** provide sport with pollack, coalfish and mackerel in season on spinning and float fishing tackle. Wrasse can also be taken while bottom or float fishing with crab or ragworm baits. Care should be exercised here at all times particularly in wet conditions as the rocks can become very slippery.

At **Kinnogue Bay (5)** rock fishing at the eastern and western ends of the bay yields coalfish, pollack and wrasse, while fishing on the beach, below the car park, produces flounder, dab, plaice and occasional turbot, bass, and seatrout.

Shore fishing at **Tremore Bay (6)** is similar to Kinnogue, but rock fishing is confined to the western end of the bay, for pollack, coalfish and wrasse. When the surf is up, beach fishing can be productive over the sandy patches for flounder, dab, plaice, and occasional bass and seatrout.

Fishing from the beach at **Culdaff (7)** is best during late summer and early autumn for flounder, dogfish, dab, turbot, and occasional bass and seatrout. Catches of twenty flatfish on a tide are not uncommon, and the baits which bring best results are sandeel, mackerel strip and lugworm. Conger to almost 20kg have been caught from Bunagee Pier at the western side of Culdaff Bay, while the rocks to the north of the pier yield mackerel in season, pollack, coalfish and occasional codling. Small boats can be launched from the slipway beside the pier for fishing the inshore waters between Glengad Head and Dunmore Head where red gurnard to over specimen size of .90kg., plaice, ray, turbot, john dory, codling and whiting have been recorded and up to twenty species can be expected in a day. The slipway is viable for launch and retrieval on all stages of the tide with the exception of extreme low tide on springs. Another notable feature of the area is the first class tope fishing which is available from mid June to mid September. In recent years catches of up to 30 fish a day have been recorded with the best fish weighing almost 23 kg.

There is a charter boat operation based at the pier which specialises in fishing the numerous offshore wrecks in the Northern Approaches. This is where German U boats operated during the two world wars, against the trans Atlantic convoys which carried food, troops and equipment for the Allied war effort. Literally hundreds of vessels were torpedoed and sunk off this coastline and many of the wrecks lie in very deep water and have never seen a rod and line. Some of those closer to port, within a twenty five mile radius, are the first world war wreck 'Athenia', a 9,000 ton cargo liner which lies in 60 metres, the second world war, 11,000 ton freighter 'Cumberland' lying in 55 metres, and the massive 35,000 ton liner 'Justicia' lying in 70 metres. Many specimen fish have been taken from these wrecks including ling to over 11kg, coalfish to over 7kg and pollack to over 6kg. Each year in late August and early September, porbeagle shark to over 45kg have also been hooked in the vicinity of these wrecks.

Before it enters the sea at the western end of the beach the **Culdaff River (B)** forms a small estuary behind the sand dunes. Lugworm are found on the banks of the channel and where the river crosses the beach, sandeel can be dug in the wet sand.

Spinning and float fishing from several rocky vantage points at **Glengad Head (8)** will yield pollack, mackerel, wrasse and coalfish. Bottom fished baits will attract conger, dogfish and rockling.

**Malin Head (9)** is the most northerly point in Ireland, and is also the location of a radio weather station often mentioned in North Atlantic sea area forecasts. As the R242 road winds its way around the headland it affords spectacular views of the sea, sometimes several hundred feet below. Much of the Head is inaccessible to anglers but the pier on the north eastern side

affords access to deep water at high tide with spinning, float fishing and bottom fishing all possible. Coalfish, pollack, wrasse, conger, dogfish and dab are all normally available and mackerel can be caught, particularly on evening tides, in summer. There are also several rocky outcrops which can be accessed on the northern side of the Head, but these should only be approached in dry settled weather and never in northerly winds, which can push dangerous waves onto the shore. Fishing in the area produces pollack to over 3.5kg, and ballan wrasse to over 2.25kg. Other possible species are coalfish, conger and dogfish.

To the south of Malin Head lies the quaintly named and picturesque **Five Fingers Strand (10)** which is a shallow beach of golden sand and very popular in summer with picnickers and swimmers. In sunny settled weather, it is impossible to fish there during daylight but come evening, and the last of the day-trippers have departed, the quietness returns. Sandeel, mackerel strip, lugworm or white ragworm will all take fish on a flooding tide, particularly at dusk. Sea trout, turbot and flounder are available in most sea conditions, but when surf is running, bass also become a distinct possibility. After dark, larger baits cast well out will attract dogfish, huss and even an occasional ray is possible. As the R242 road swings back east from the beach towards Malin village it runs along the Northern Shore of **Trawbrega Bay (C)** where lugworm casts will be found on the banks of the estuary channel. Trench digging is most productive just to the south of the road bridge at Malin, where worms are plentiful but the foreshore is very muddy.

From the town of Carndonagh the R238 runs north west parallel to the southern shore of Trawbrega Bay and as it bears south, about 3kms before Ballyliffin, a small road runs north to **Doagh Island (11)** which affords easy access to the southern side of the main channel leading to Trawbrega Bay. From the channel banks, on a flooding tide, free lined sandeel or spinning with plugs, will yield sea trout in summer and occasional bass in autumn. Bottom fishing at high tide with crab or worm baits will produce freshwater eels, flounder and dogfish.

On the western side of Doagh Island is **Pollan Bay (12)** which, like many of the beaches in the area is shallow, crystal clear and offers limited angling possibilities during daylight. A flood tide in the evening, however, offers good opportunities for flounder, dab, turbot, seatrout and occasional bass. Sandeel, mackerel strip and white ragworm are the best baits.

To the south west of Pollan Bay is an area of rocky shoreline at **Binnion (13)**. This gives access to some 7 metres of water at mid tide. Much of the ground close to the rock is very rough and tackle losses are almost inevitable, but casts of over 90 metres will find sand in three or four places along the stretch. These sandy tracts can be easily spotted from the shore when wearing polarised sunglasses. Spinning will account for pollack and mackerel in summer, while float and bottom fishing close to the rock should yield coalfish and wrasse. Casting out over sand should also throw up dab, ray, and dogfish.

By turning north onto a narrow road from the R238 in Clonmany a 3km journey leads to **Tullagh Strand (14)** which has in the past produced silver eels, whiting, flounder and dab for shore anglers, particularly at night. It should also be possible to catch seatrout and occasional bass there when moderate surf is running. Crab can be collected along the weedy eastern shore of **Tullagh Point (D)** while lugworm can be dug on the eastern end of the bay.

Looking out from the rocky promontory of **Dunaff Head (15)** the lighthouse on Fanad Head to the west, can be viewed across the mouth of Lough Swilly while to the south the inner waters sweep away for some 40 kilometres inland towards the town of Letterkenny in the south. The southern side of the Head is the safest place to fish from and there are several rock perches there, where ballan and corkwing wrasse are plentiful on float or bottom fished crab. Pollack and mackerel can also be taken during high tides in summer on shads or Redgill type lures. Conger, too are also a possibility on large bottom fished baits. To the south of Dunaff Head the next major outcrop is **Lenan Head (16)** where there is some excellent spinning for pollack and mackerel from the northern shore in summer. Float fishing over very foul ground will also yield wrasse and coalfish. There is an even wider range of species available from the pier and rocks on the southern side. Float fishing close to the pier will produce coalfish, wrasse, pollack and launce while casting out over sand in some 10 to 12 metres of water throws up ray, dogfish, codling, plaice and dab. The last three hours of a flood tide being the best period.

To the south of the fortifications (relics of the Napoleonic Wars and more recently an army base) at **Dunree Head (17)** there are several vantage points where wrasse, pollack, coalfish, dogfish and occasional conger can be caught. Fishing is at its peak here from July to September.

Below Dunree on the beach at **Stragill (E)** lugworm are plentiful, when trench digging, though they are somewhat small. Larger worms can be found nearer the low tide line but they are burrowed deep in the sand and can only be taken successfully by single digging, which is time consuming and not very productive.

From the old pier at **Buncrana (18)** Float fishing will usually provide sport for mackerel in summer. Casting out over sandy ground will produce ray, dogfish, whiting and dabs. Sea trout will also occasionally fall to spinners. The best fishing period is about two hours either side of high water. When heavy rain falls locally however, leading to an excess of freshwater running into the upper reaches of the Lough from the Rivers Swilly, Mile Water and Crana then marine species seem to move away from the shore with only sea trout apparently unaffected.

Similarly fishing at **Fahan (19)** is diminished by freshwater run off and the best period there is invariably after long spells of fairly dry weather. Fishing is best when the tide is making up the channel on the first two hours of the flood when ray, dogfish and flounder can be expected.