



Herring Spawning Grounds

Unlike any other fish caught off The British Isles, herring spawn at various times of the year. There are three basic classes of herring spawning in various zones off The British coast. The northern most group are made up of two different classes, one class spawn on the west coast of Scotland around the Outer Hebrides, and that is the largest and finest herring found on the coast of Britain. They were in very great demand for kippering, the large ones known as matie-furls were in the finest condition because the roe was yet undeveloped and the fish absorbed the whole nutrient. The other branch of the northern herring group spawns on the east coast around the Orkney Islands.

The two other groups are the southern and central groups which spawn off the eastern and southern coasts of Britain. There are also seasonal variations in the spawning times, with the northern group spawning in the spring and autumn, the central group in the autumn, and the southern group in the autumn and winter.

Herring is very prolific, a female laying anything from 30,000 to upwards of 75,000 eggs at a time. It is the only fish ova which sink to the bottom where they adhere to shingle, stones or shells, and always on clean ground. In the larval stage many of these fish drift westwards towards the Danish, Dutch, German and Norwegian coasts. After maturing there, they return to their respective spawning grounds in their third and fourth year.

Herring are very vulnerable to damage as they have many predators, chief among them are cod and dogfish. Fishermen also regard dogfish as a pest. Not only do they cause great damage to herring in their nets, but their rough spiky skin play havoc with their hands and their nets.

Herring live on plankton, and is a protein-packed nutritious meal, but due to its massive exploitation has become a delicacy today, rather than an inexpensive meal.

The debate about the spawning and migrating habits of the herring continue, and present day scientists are in a better position to gather accurate scientific information.

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