



Mini Species Guide

A Reference Guide To Mini Species Caught Around The Irish Coastline.



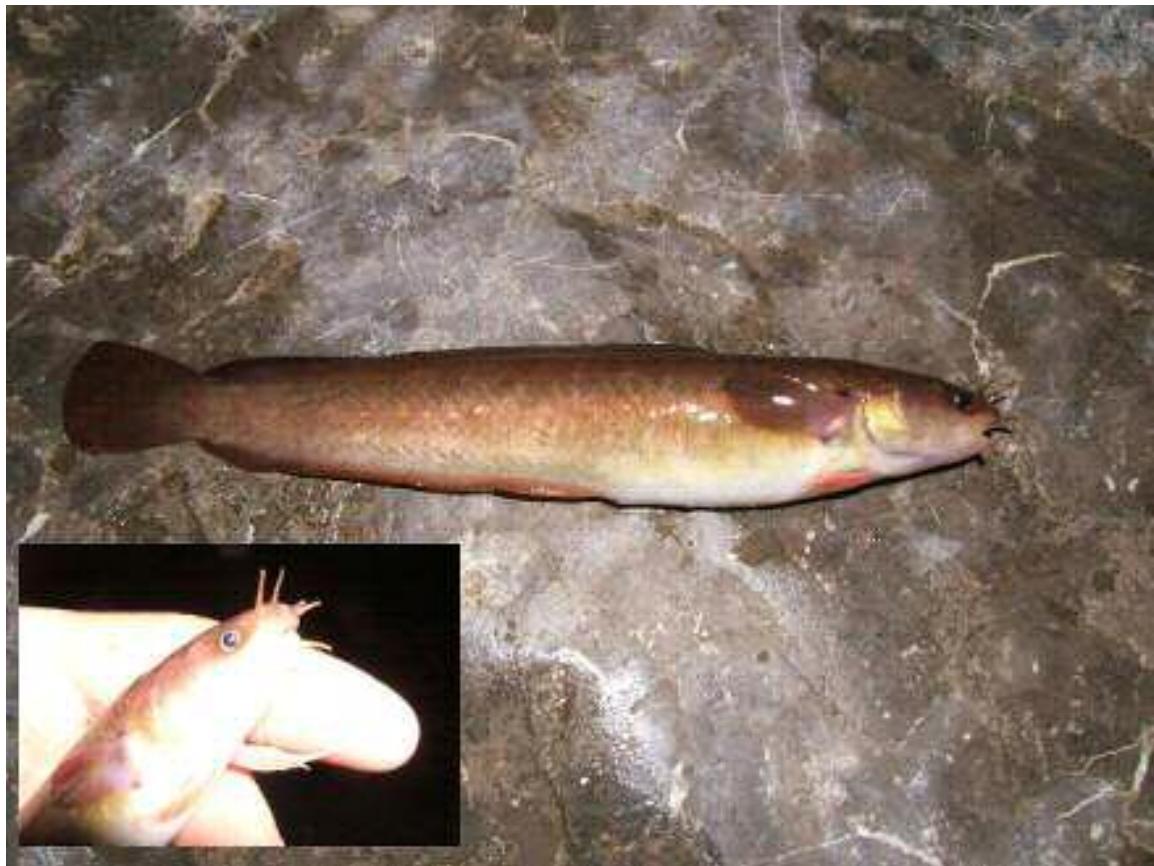
By
Ronald Surgenor
Edited by
Stephen Turner

3 Bearded Rockling



3 Bearded Rockling is the biggest of our resident rockling. The shore Rockling also has 3 beards but is a smaller fish. The 3 bearded has a mainly light coloured body with dark spots and is normally caught over rough ground on mackerel baits meant for bigger fish, they have no problem getting their mouths around a 6/0 hook and a fillet of mackerel.

5 Bearded Rockling



5 Bearded rockling are generally caught over a mixed weed/sand/mud bottom on worm or fish baits intended for flat fish, it's not always easy to spot the five beards (4 on the snout and 1 on the chin) as the 2 just above the upper lip are smaller than the 2 on the snout and are easily overlooked.



Ballan Wrasse



Ballan wrasse are amongst the hardest fighting fish in our waters, very slow growing and not as tough as you would expect considering the sort of places they inhabit so handle with care. They are the largest of the Irish wrasse and quite often the juvenile fish are encountered whilst fishing for mini species. Their colours can range from dark green to bright red, all depending on the type of area they are taken from. Normally 2-3 spines on the anal fin.

Black Goby



Black Goby's are best identified by looking for the 2 dark spots on the paired dorsal fins, the above photo shows a male in breeding coloration with it's enlarged first dorsal fin especially around the central rays, they lose this later in the year as can be seen in the photo below. Both these fish were taken on rag-worm .



Butter fish / Gunnel



Butter fish or Gunnel can be caught over a mixed bottom of stone and sand or mud ,small hooks of 6 or 8 baited with small rag or fish baits are best if trying for this small fish, the name comes from the fact that they are an absolute nightmare to hold onto .

Corkwing Wrasse



The Corkwing Wrasse is sometimes be confused with either a small Ballan Wrasse or the rock cook wrasse, but the head shape and the serrated edge of the pre-operculum on the gill cover are the most obvious methods of identifying a Corkwing Wrasse. Sometimes there is a dark spot behind the eye and in the centre of the wrist of the tail but this can be hard to spot in some fish, also there is a faint barring on the body running up through the dorsal fin which can be easily seen when the dorsal is held up to the light ,showing as dark spots.

The fish above is a male showing the green coloring on the cheeks unlike the electric blue of the rock cook wrasse, the fish below is the female Corkwing wrasse.



Goldshinny Wrasse



Goldshinny wrasse are amongst the smallest of the wrasses found around the Irish coast. They have a dark spot on the front edge of the dorsal fin and at the wrist of the tail along the top edge, the tail section of a ragworm is a very good bait, mustad shrimp rigs cut down to 1 or 2 hook rigs and baited with small worm or fish bait sections are a good way of fishing for these wee fellas .

Pouting and Poorcod



Pouting and Poorcod are often confused the above the photo shows a pouting at the top and a Poorcod at the bottom ,when their side by side it is easy to spot the difference's ,the anal fin of the pouting starts in a line half way below the dorsal fin almost directly below the pectoral fin . The Poorcod's anal fin starts in line with the back edge of the dorsal fin. As Pouting mature they get a dark barring effect on their bodies which fades quickly when kept out of the water for any length of time .

Rock Cook / Small Mouthed Wrasse



Rock cook or small mouthed wrasse are best identified by the electric blue colouring on the head, both male and female have this, the female will also normally have a dark band running across the rays of the tail, in the male this is harder to spot. They can be an orange/gold colour on the body although this tends to be more in the female fish.

Rock Goby



Rock Gobies can be easily identified by the strip of colour on the dorsal fin, anything from yellow to orange. The male fish tends to be almost black, the female a more brown mottled colour.

Shanny / Common Blenny



The Shanny or Common Blenny our most common blenny, caught from shallow water or found under rocks whilst bait collecting .

Unlike the gobies which have 2 dorsal fins the blennies have an almost continuous dorsal fin.

They will have a go at almost any bait put in front of them and can even be seen attacking the weight as it drops down a quay wall or rock face.

Shore Rockling



Shore rockling are very often confused with the bigger cousin the 3 bearded rockling, but unlike the 3 bearded the shore rockling's body is darker coloured with a covering of light coloured spots, some fish are nearly pure dark brown with only a few very small cream spots.

Short Spined Sea Scorpion and Long Spined Sea Scorpion



Short Spined Sea Scorpion is the big brother of the Long Spined Sea Scorpion the length of the spines alone can be used to tell the difference between these 2 species with the Short Spined having 4 main spines on each gill cover all quite short, unlike the Long Spined pictured below which has 5 main spines on each gill cover with the upper most spine being considerably longer than the rest.



The Long Spined Sea scorpion's colour varies greatly depending on habitat, unlike the Short Spined variety which tends to be a more olive brown colour.

Tadpole Fish / Lesser Forkbeard



Tadpole Fish or Lesser Forkbeard are a bit of a rarity around the Irish coast, a very secretive fish that lives in the roughest of areas where it can hide between boulders or in dense kelp beds, it's mouth and head is massive in comparison the size of the rest of the fishes body, general coloration is dark brown with a pure white mouth .

Tompot Blenny



Tompot Blenny showing it's eye brows, this is a sturdily built wee fish that can give a nasty nip when being unhooked so be careful when unhooking, I've had one draw blood before !



Topknot



The Topknot is Irelands rarest and smallest flatfish, they are normally found clinging to rock faces or pier walls, they can be caught on worm or fish baits, when handled they feel very rough to touch and the fins seem to run all the way around the body only stopping at the mouth .

Yarrels Blenny



The Yarrels blenny is a more northerly species of blenny, best distinguished by the fleshy first spine on its dorsal fin and its longer, slim body and a dorsal fin of a continuous height. Like the Tompot Blenny it has 2 tentacles above the eyes.

