SHOAL AND OPEN-WATER FISH

European anchovy

Engraulis encrasicolus

Caught off the Sussex coast | None listed



European anchovy (*Engraulis encrasicolus*). Picture: Duarte Frade, CC BY 4.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), via Wikimedia Commons: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Engraulis_encrasicolus_57044460.jpg.

Key facts

IDENTIFY IT
Slim, round-bodied little fish with a blue-green back, silver belly and a deep mouth that reaches behind the eye.

SIZE
Typically about 13.5 cm, up to 21 cm (Wikipedia).

HABITAT
Coastal open water, usually shallower than 50 m in summer. Tolerates estuaries and lagoons (Wikipedia).

OFF SUSSEX
Recorded off Sussex; no months in our sources

AROUND BRITAIN
Common off Devon and Cornwall in winter, not in commercial numbers. Spawns about April to November (Wikipedia).

METHODS
Not given in our sources

GROUP
Shoal and open-water fish

IN SHORT
The European anchovy is a slim, round-bodied little fish with a blue-green back and a silver belly. The British mini-species record anchovy was taken off Hastings, East Sussex, in 2003. British boat record: none listed.

COME FISHING WITH US

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The European anchovy has been recorded off the Sussex coast, but none of our trips sets out to catch it. Come and see what is biting on one of our eight trips (Prices 2027):

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Free tuition and free gutting and filleting of your catch. Rod hire £10 per person; fishing tackle is included on the shark trip.

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About the European anchovy

The European anchovy is a slim, round-bodied little fish with a blue-green back and a silver belly. Look at the mouth and you will see it is deep, reaching back behind the eye, which is a useful clue when you are sorting small silver shoal fish. Most are about 13.5 cm long, and the biggest reach around 21 cm, so this is a fish measured in centimetres and grams rather than pounds. Anchovies live in coastal open water, usually shallower than 50 m in summer, and they cope with estuaries and lagoons too. Around Britain they are noted as common off Devon and Cornwall in winter, though not in commercial numbers. They spawn from about April to November. It is a small fish, and it belongs to the mini-species group on the official British record list. The anchovy entry on that list comes from the Sussex coast: 49 g, off Hastings, in 2003. The list does not say whether it was caught from a boat, so we do not call it a boat record. Even so, it gives the species a little local interest.

On the boat

The species record does not give a method, a bait or a Sussex month for anchovy, so we will not guess. What is known is that it is a small shoal fish of coastal water, usually shallower than 50 m in summer. It is most often recorded off Devon and Cornwall in winter.

British boat-caught record

None listed

No British boat-caught record is confirmed for this species. The official June 2026 list carries an anchovy in its mini-species table: 49 g, Douglas Roots, off Hastings, East Sussex, in 2003. That table does not split boat and shore catches. The words 'off Hastings' suggest a boat, but the list does not say so, so we do not call it a boat record.

Care and rules

The minimum landing size is 12 cm, according to the Gov.uk table checked in 2026. The IUCN lists the European anchovy as Least Concern. No other protection or release rules were found in our sources. Rules change: check the current rules before you fish.

Did you know?

The official British mini-species record for anchovy is just 49 g. It was taken off Hastings, East Sussex, in 2003, so the country's smallest-fish table has a Sussex entry.

Sources: Wikipedia: European anchovy; Gov.uk MCRS in UK waters; BRFC sea fish listings June 2026. The full guide, with links to every source: kestrelwarrior6.co.uk/sea-fish-guide/anchovy/