BASS, BREAM AND MULLET

John Dory

Zeus faber

Caught off the Sussex coast | Confirmed record



John Dory (*Zeus faber*). Picture: de:Benutzer:Kleines.Opossum, CC BY-SA 3.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/), via Wikimedia Commons: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zeus.faber.jpg.

IN SHORT

The John Dory is an odd-looking fish and a memorable one. The British boat record John Dory came from off Newhaven, East Sussex, and one was reported from Brighton Marina east arm in autumn 2025 as a rare catch. British boat record: confirmed.

Key facts

IDENTIFY IT
Almost round, flat-sided fish with a big black spot on each side, a large mouth and long spiky dorsal filaments.

SIZE
Up to 3ft and 9lb, but typically less than half that size.

HABITAT
Found from a few metres to several hundred metres deep. Usually solitary, with small fish sometimes in small shoals.

OFF SUSSEX
Recorded off Sussex; no months in our sources

AROUND BRITAIN
In UK waters it is confined to southern England and Ireland in the warmer months. No specific months given.

METHODS
Usually caught by boat anglers fishing some way offshore. Takes lures and fish strip that flutters in the tide. Shore catches are very rare.

GROUP
Bass, bream and mullet

COME FISHING WITH US

Fish with Kestrel Warrior from Brighton Marina

The John Dory 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):

- **Sightseeing tour** 1 hour, £20 pp
- **Squid and cuttlefish trip** 3 hours, £55 pp
- **Sea fishing trip at anchor, multiple species** 8 hours, £75 pp
- **Wreck fishing at anchor** 10 hours, £110 pp
- **Mackerel trip** 90 minutes, £27 pp
- **Sea fishing trip, multiple species** 4 hours, £55 pp
- **Flatfish drift trip** 8 hours, £90 pp
- **Shark fishing trip** 10 hours, £150 pp

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

Scan to book

Book: ring **07896 471691** (8am to 9pm, seven days a week) · info@kestrelwarrior6.co.uk · kestrelwarrior6.co.uk/contact/

About the John Dory

The John Dory is an odd-looking fish and a memorable one. It is almost round and flat-sided, with a big black spot on each side, a large mouth and long spiky dorsal filaments.

It can reach 3ft and 9lb, but is typically less than half that size. It is usually solitary, though small fish are sometimes found in small shoals, and it lives from a few metres to several hundred metres deep.

In UK waters it is confined to southern England and Ireland in the warmer months, although no specific months are given. It is usually caught by boat anglers fishing some way offshore. It takes lures and strips of fish that flutter in the tide. Shore catches are very rare.

There is a Sussex link. The British boat record, 11lb 14oz, was caught off Newhaven, East Sussex, in 1977, and a John Dory was reported from the Brighton Marina east arm in autumn 2025, described as a rare catch.

So it is no everyday fish, but it is one that Sussex anglers can feel some connection with.

On the boat

The John Dory is usually caught by boat anglers fishing some way offshore. It takes lures and strips of fish that flutter in the tide. In UK waters it is confined to southern England and Ireland in the warmer months, but no specific months are given, so we cannot say more. Shore catches are very rare. The record gives no Sussex fishing months either.

British boat-caught record

Confirmed record

Weight	11lb 14oz 0dr (5.386kg)
Where	Off Newhaven, East Sussex
When	1977
Angler	J Johnson

Confirmed British boat-caught record: J Johnson, 11lb 14oz 0dr (5.386kg), off Newhaven, East Sussex, 1977. This is the official British Record Fish Committee listing. The official weight-based boat records were frozen in June 2024, and newer boat claims are now by length only, with a qualifying length of 50cm.

Care and rules

The source says no UK minimum size applies and fishing is mostly unregulated. Nothing in our sources covers release or eating advice. Rules change: check the current rules before you fish.

Did you know?

A John Dory has a big black spot on each side and long spiky dorsal filaments. The official British boat record, 11lb 14oz, was caught off Newhaven in 1977.

Sources: British Sea Fishing: John Dory; BRFC sea fish listings June 2026; Prime Angling: West Sussex report 5 Oct 2025. The full guide, with links to every source: kestrelwarrior6.co.uk/sea-fish-guide/john-dory/