SHOAL AND OPEN-WATER FISH

Lesser sandeel

Ammodytes tobianus Also known as Lesser sand eel

Not recorded off Sussex in our sources | None listed



Lesser sandeel (*Ammodytes tobianus*). Picture: Hans Hillewaert, CC BY-SA 4.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/), via Wikimedia Commons: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ammodytes_tobianus_(catch).jpg.

IN SHORT

The lesser sandeel is a small, slim, silvery fish, under 20 cm long, with a greenish-yellow back. Our sources do not record it off the Sussex coast. British boat record: none listed.

Key facts

IDENTIFY IT
Slim, silvery eel-shaped fish under 20 cm with a greenish-yellow back, long ribbon-like dorsal fin and forked tail.

SIZE
Up to 20 cm (Wikipedia).

HABITAT
Inshore from mid-tide down to about 30 m over clean sand. Forms big shoals and buries itself in the sand when alarmed (Wikipedia).

OFF SUSSEX
Not recorded in our sources

AROUND BRITAIN
Breeding usually February to April or September to November (Wikipedia). This is a breeding period, not a catch calendar.

METHODS
Not given in our sources

GROUP
Shoal and open-water fish

COME FISHING WITH US

Fish with Kestrel Warrior from Brighton Marina

The lesser sandeel is not one of the fish our sources record off Sussex, so no Kestrel Warrior trip targets it. Come and fish the Sussex coast on one of our eight trips (Prices 2027):

- **Sightseeing tour** 1 hour, £20 pp
- **Squid and cuttlefish trip** 3 hours, £55 pp
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- **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
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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 lesser sandeel

The lesser sandeel is a small, slim, silvery fish, under 20 cm long, with a greenish-yellow back. It has a long ribbon-like dorsal fin and a forked tail, and the whole body is shaped like a tiny eel. It lives inshore, from mid-tide down to about 30 m, over clean sand. It forms big shoals, and when something alarms it, it buries itself in the sand. That is a neat trick, and it explains why sandy ground matters to it. It is found along the coasts of the British Isles. It breeds usually from February to April or September to November, which tells you about its life cycle, not when to expect it on the end of a line. Our sources give no fishing methods, no catch months and no Sussex notes, so we have not guessed at any. If you want to tell the lesser from the greater sandeel, size is the first clue: the lesser stays under 20 cm, while the greater can reach about 35 cm. It is a small fish, but a fascinating one to know about, with its habit of vanishing into the sand.

On the boat

We do not have a verified method, month or ground for catching lesser sandeels from a boat. The species record gives no fishing methods and no Sussex months, so nothing is guessed here. It lives inshore over clean sand, from mid-tide to about 30 m. Its breeding months are not a catch calendar.

British boat-caught record

None listed

No British boat-caught record is listed for this species. No lesser sandeel entry appears in the June 2026 British Record Fish Committee sea fish listings, which include only greater and Corbin's sandeel.

Care and rules

The lesser sandeel is not listed on the Gov.uk minimum conservation reference sizes page (checked 2026), so no landing size is given there. No protection or release advice was found in our sources. Rules change: check the current rules before you fish.

Did you know?

When alarmed, the lesser sandeel buries itself in the sand, and it forms big shoals over clean sand from mid-tide down to about 30 m.

Sources: Wikipedia: Ammodytes tobianus; BRFC sea fish listings June 2026; Gov.uk MCRS in UK waters; Wikipedia: Lesser sand eel. The full guide, with links to every source: kestrelwarrior6.co.uk/sea-fish-guide/lesser-sandeel/