SHOAL AND OPEN-WATER FISH

Horse mackerel

Trachurus trachurus Also known as scad, Atlantic horse mackerel

Caught off the Sussex coast | Confirmed record



Horse mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus*). Picture: jujurenoult, CC BY 4.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), via Wikimedia Commons: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trachurus_trachurus_France.jpg.

IN SHORT

Scad looks a lot like a mackerel at first glance. A few scad were caught in the dark at Sussex venues in late September 2025, and Kestrel Warrior lists them among fish taken on its mackerel trips. British boat record: confirmed.

Key facts

IDENTIFY IT
Slim, silvery-grey fish like a mackerel but with a row of bony scutes along the lateral line and a dark spot on the gill cover.

SIZE
Normally about 25 cm, up to 60 cm (Wikipedia). Maximum around 1.5 kg, most under half that (Planet Sea Fishing).

HABITAT
Open water over sandy seabed, found through the water column but mostly nearer the surface, in water under 100 m deep (Planet Sea Fishing). Wikipedia also gives 100 to 200 m over sand.

OFF SUSSEX
A few caught at night in late September 2025 (Prime Angling). Kestrel Warrior lists scad among fish caught on its mackerel trips.

AROUND BRITAIN
No months in our sources

METHODS
Feathers and small lures work well, as scad take them like mackerel (Planet Sea Fishing). Baits include small fish, ragworm and squid strip.

GROUP
Shoal and open-water fish

COME FISHING WITH US

Fish with Kestrel Warrior from Brighton Marina

Where you might meet horse mackerel with Captain Ant:

- **Horse mackerel on the 90-minute mackerel trip** (tuition included, keep what you catch; 90 minutes, £27 per person or £250 whole boat)

Free tuition and free gutting and filleting of your catch. Rod hire £10 per person; fishing tackle is included on the shark trip. Prices 2027 from £20 per person: kestrelwarrior6.co.uk/charter-boat-fishing-prices/

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

Scan to book

About the horse mackerel

Scad looks a lot like a mackerel at first glance. It is a slim, silvery-grey fish with a row of bony scutes along the lateral line and a dark spot on the gill cover, and those two clues set it apart. It is also called horse mackerel, though it is not a true mackerel. Scad normally measure about 25 cm and can reach 60 cm. Planet Sea Fishing gives a maximum of around 1.5 kg, with most under half that. They live in open water over a sandy seabed, mostly nearer the surface, in water under 100 m deep. Scad take feathers and small lures much as mackerel do, so a mixed bag is possible, and Kestrel Warrior lists scad among the fish caught on its mackerel trips. Our sources give no month-by-month calendar for scad in Britain, so we have not invented one. The IUCN lists the species as Vulnerable overall, though European waters show no decline, so it is worth handling any you keep or return with care.

On the boat

Scad take feathers and small lures in the same way as mackerel, according to Planet Sea Fishing. Baits include small fish, ragworm and squid strip. No month-by-month catch calendar was found for Britain. In Sussex, a few were caught at night in late September 2025 (Prime Angling), and Kestrel Warrior lists scad among the fish caught on its mackerel trips.

British boat-caught record

Confirmed record

Weight	3 lb 8 oz (1.588 kg)
Where	Eddystone Lighthouse, Cornwall
When	1978
Angler	Graham Eden

Confirmed British boat-caught record: Graham Eden, 3 lb 8 oz (1.588 kg), at Eddystone Lighthouse, Cornwall, in 1978. This is a historical weight record from the official British Record Fish Committee list. The official weight-based boat records were frozen in June 2024, and new claims are by length only, with a qualifying length of 60 cm.

Care and rules

The minimum landing size is 15 cm, according to the Gov.uk table checked in 2026. Wikipedia gives the IUCN status as Vulnerable overall, though European waters show no decline. Rules change: check the current rules before you fish.

Did you know?

The IUCN lists the Atlantic horse mackerel as Vulnerable overall, yet Wikipedia notes that European waters show no decline. The picture changes depending on where you look.

Sources: Wikipedia: Atlantic horse mackerel; Planet Sea Fishing: Trachurus trachurus; Kestrel Warrior mackerel trip; Prime Angling West Sussex report 28 Sep 2025; 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/scad/