

# Mackerel bonanza for Aquamarine anglers

The rod tip dipped. I struck and the fish darted away underneath our boat drifting off Eyemouth. It streaked away so I tightened the clutch to halt the charge. An angler to my right snagged my line so I tightened the clutch a touch further to allow him to release it.

Sadly, the tension was gone. The fish had broken the rig body of 40lb and all I had left was a swivel.

A nano-second later, to my left, another angler shouted: "I've hooked a bird."

Skipper Ronnie Marshall stayed calm, delivering instructions: "Reel in, keep it coming and get it on board."

The gannet was carefully lifted onto the deck. The sizeable bird, naturally, tried to defend itself. Ronnie dodged the beak as he held it down and he asked another angler to grab the gannet's neck.

Seconds later the bird was free and it flew away. So was my fish.

I persevered for four fruitless hours with mackerel, mussel and worm baits, but to no avail. Cod, plentiful in May and June, and Ronnie tells a story of a group of young people,

novices in fact, who plundered several hundred in two hours off The Hirst, a rocky peak rising to within six fathoms of the surface at low tide. Almost all were small and were returned. Good sport, however, and the kids loved it.

My expectation of hooking into cod at this time of year was low. They are semi-migratory and some move to colder Scandinavian waters in the summer, while smaller specimens stay around the shores of Britain.

A pollock or link or even wrasse would have been good. Sadly, the cod, even the small ones, and other species, on this day, had decided not to feed on my bait. Three cod were hooked elsewhere on the boat, but they were small.

Most of the other anglers on Sagittarius out of Eyemouth were busy, however. We bobbed up and down in the stiff breeze around under blue skies with the sun blazing while they targeted mackerel. They certainly came out to play, in shoals. While I sat watching my rod tip in vain, they were gleefully reeling in the fish after fish.

Buckets on deck soon became full and I decided to sidestep other species and join them for the final two hours of the six-hour charter. It proved to be good sport. Four feathers on, lowered over the side with a 150 gram weight. The feathers sank, slowly, as I tried to find the depth the fish were sitting at.

Nothing for the first two casts. I hit bottom, nothing, half way up and a tug. The first mackerel, sizeable. Next cast I decided to go deep and then retrieve slowly again. As the feathers reached the top section of the water bang. Three jumped on.

Same tactic next cast. Lower deep and then retrieve slowly. Two this time.

My bucket quickly became full and I am now sorted for winter

fishing bait. My neighbours were also happy as they were in receipt of the unrequired extras.

Aquamarine Charters run regular, half-day, full-day and evening trips from Eyemouth. Mackerel fishing is undoubtedly great fun and a tremendous way to encourage youngsters into fishing. Mackerel have health benefits as they are packed with oils and Omega-3 and they are a rich source of vitamins, minerals and good fats. Indeed, the American Heart Association recommend eating at least two servings of fatty fish, like mackerel, every week.

Skipper Ronnie confirmed that July and August are prime months for mackerel fishing. You don't need much in the way of equipment, rod, reel and feathers. Drop a few feathers in and, normally, you are in business.

The skipper knows where they are and moves around the sea to productive spots. He also exits an area when seals are spotted, and they were, several of them.

Sagittarius provides an ideal platform. It is a Blyth Workboat 33 catamaran, ten metres long and almost five metres wide, which has excellent sea keeping abilities.

The large deck area, which has seating, makes it relatively easy to move around, for sorting kit and gutting fish on a table at the stern. It also has a toilet.

All equipment can be hired and there are a small selection of hooks, weights and lures onboard to buy. Bring your own bait.

The type of fish caught depends on the season. Pollock, cod, ling, mackerel, wrasse and possibly wolf fish are in the water. Yes, I was disappointed not to hook cod or any other species this time but I'll try again however I am unlikely to get such good weather as Autumn heads into winter.

PICTURE: a fine catch by one happy angler on board a charter.

Contributed.







