



Top: Atlantic Horse Mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus*)  
Middle: Pilotfish (*Naucrates ductor*)  
Bottom: Almaco Amberjack (*Seriola rivoliana*)

# Carangidae

## in Irish & Northern European Waters

By Declan T. Quigley

SCADS, horse-mackerels, jacks, crevalles, amberjacks, pompanos, threadfins, bumpers, trevallys, runners, leerfish, vadigo, derbio, permits, lookdowns and pilotfish belong to a large and diverse family (*Carangidae*) of mainly tropical and warm temperate marine fishes represented by 32 genera and 140 known species. However, only 25 species (representing 14 genera) have been recorded from the North-eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean; 14 of these species (representing 9 genera) from European Atlantic waters and only 3-4 species (representing 3 genera) from Irish waters (Table 1). The family includes many valuable food and sporting fishes.

The scad or horse mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus*) is the only common member of the *Carangid* family in Northern European seas where it is heavily exploited as a valuable food fish. Between 1982 and 2005, landings of the Western European stock averaged 247,500 tonnes per annum, peaking during the mid-1990s at 400-500,000 tonnes before declining to a mean of around 150,000 tonnes in recent years.

While the other *Carangid* species only occur as rare vagrants from warmer waters to the south, there has been a notable increase in the number of species occurring in UK, French and Mediterranean waters over the last half century and recent

climatic changes, particularly thermal increases, have been suggested as a causative factor. For example, in French waters, the number of species increased by 100% from 5 in 1950 to 10 in 1987, while the number of species recorded in UK waters increased by 166% from 3 in 1951 to 8 in 2000. Over the same period, the number of species recorded in Irish waters increased by 100% (following the unconfirmed capture of a greater amberjack *Seriola dumerili* in 1990 off Kilkee and the first authenticated almaco amberjack *S. rivoliana* off Connemara in 2006).

### Pilotfish (*Naucrates ductor*)

The pilotfish is primarily a pelagic oceanic species found worldwide in warm seas. Although it has been recorded on one occasion from Norwegian waters, it is generally regarded as an uncommon or rare wanderer in northern European waters (N of the English Channel). Nevertheless, the species has been recorded with increasing frequency in Irish waters since the late 1950s; about 90 specimens have been recorded to date. The species' well known habit of accompanying floating objects such as seaweed, boats, rafts and driftwood and apparent semi-obligate commensal relationship with sharks, rays, turtles and jellyfish, may account for its widespread distribution. Indeed, a significant number of the specimens recorded in Irish, UK and French

waters were found in association with Leatherback turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*). In tropical waters, they are often found in association with blue shark (*Prionace glauca*), but this has not been observed in Irish waters. Although pilotfish are rarely taken by anglers, a specimen weighing 298g was captured on rod & line in the Towy Estuary, Carmarthen Bay, Wales during 1997.

### Almaco Amberjack (*Seriola rivoliana*)

The almaco amberjack has a worldwide circum-tropical distribution, only entering temperate waters in some areas. Adults are pelagic and epibenthic (on outer reef slopes and offshore banks) and possibly more oceanic than other *Seriolids*; juveniles are pelagic and usually occur offshore, often under floating seaweed and debris, but occasionally close to the shore. The World Record rod & line caught (Atlantic) almaco amberjack weighing 35.38kg was captured off Argus Bank, Bermuda in 1990 while the Pacific record weighing 59.87kg was taken off La Paz, Baja California, Mexico in 1964.

Although the species is apparently rare in the NE Atlantic and Mediterranean, juveniles have been recorded with increasing frequency in Northern European waters since the mid-1980s. For example, since 1984, a total of 6 specimens have been recorded from UK waters and since 1987, a total of 10 specimens from French waters. The species was recorded for the first time in the Mediterranean in 2000 and from Irish waters in 2006.

It is interesting to note that over the same period other *Carangids* were recorded for the first time in Mediterranean [lesser amberjack *S. fasciata* (1993) and Guinean amberjack *S. carpenteri* (2000)], French [*S. carpenteri* (1985) and *S. dumerili* (1984)], UK [*S. carpenteri* (2000) and blue runner *Caranx crysos* (1992)] and Irish [*S. dumerili*? (1990)] waters.

### Conclusions

Although the total number of *Carangids* recorded from Irish waters is relatively small compared with those in French and UK waters this may only be a reflection of poorer recording effort. Indeed, it would not be surprising if the following species were already visiting Irish waters, albeit infrequently, and both anglers and inshore commercial fishermen are most likely to encounter them: vadigo (*Campogramma glycos*), *C. crysos*, *S. carpenteri*, *S. dumerili* and *derbio* (*Trachinotus ovatus*). Commercial landings of scad (*T. trachurus*), particularly from southern Irish waters, would also warrant more diligent investigation because the closely related Mediterranean horse-mackerel (*T. mediterraneus*) is known to be relatively common nearby in the Bay of Biscay.

Declan T. Quigley, Dingle  
Oceanworld (Mara Beo Teo), The  
Wood, Dingle, Co Kerry. Mobiles:  
087-6458485 & 086-8057227;  
Email: declanquigley@eircom.net

Table 1. Carangidae of the NE Atlantic & Mediterranean

Common Name	Species Name	Iceland	Scandinavia	Ireland	UK	France	Atlantic Spain	Portugal	Atlantic Morocco	Madeira	Azores	Mediterranean
Alexandria Pompano	<i>Alopiis alexandrinus</i>						√ (S)		√			√ (S)
Shrimp Scad	<i>Altopes djedaba</i>											√ (E)
Vadigo	<i>Campogramma glycos</i>				√ (2)		√	√	√			√ (W)
Blue Runner	<i>Caranx crysos</i>				√ (11)	√ (6)	√	√				√ (S)
Crevalle Jack	<i>C. hippos</i>						√ (S)	√	√	√		√ (W)
Horse-eye Jack	<i>C. latus</i>									√		
Black Jack	<i>C. lugubris</i>									√	√	
False Jack	<i>C. rhonchus</i>						√ (S)		√			√ (S)
Mackerel Scad	<i>Decapterus macarellus</i>									√	√	√ (?)
Round Scad	<i>D. punctatus</i>								√	√	√	√ (?)
Rainbow Runner	<i>Elagatis bipinnulata</i>											√ (N)
Leerfish	<i>Lichia amia</i>					√ (2)	√	√	√	√		√
Pilotfish	<i>Naucrates ductor</i>		√	√ (90)	√	√ (>126)	√		√	√	√	√
Guelly Jack	<i>Pseudocaranx dentex</i>						√ (NW)	√		√	√	√
Ox-eye Scad	<i>Selar boobis</i>							√				
African Lookdown	<i>Selene dorsalis</i>							√		√		
Guinean Amberjack	<i>Seriola carpenteri</i>				√ (7)	√ (5)			√			√ (W)
Greater Amberjack	<i>S. dumerili</i>			√ (1 ?)	√ (6)	√ (3)	√					√
Lesser Amberjack	<i>S. fasciata</i>										√ (1)	√ (W)
Almaco Amberjack	<i>S. rivoliana</i>			√ (1)	√ (6)	√ (10)	√			√	√	√ (1)
Derbio	<i>Trachinotus ovatus</i>		√ (Denmark, 2)		√ (3)	√ (17)	√		√	√	√	√
Mediterranean horse-mackerel	<i>Trachurus mediterraneus</i>						√	√	√			√
Blue Jack Mackerel	<i>T. picturatus</i>					√ (S)	√	√	√	√	√	√ (W)
Atlantic horse-mackerel	<i>T. trachurus</i>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Cunene horse-mackerel	<i>T. trecae</i>						√	√	√	√	√	√