

Assessment of the distribution and natural heritage impacts of intertidal bait collection at Tayport, part of the Firth of Tay and Eden Estuary SPA/SAC

Client: Scottish Natural Heritage
Project duration: 12 months



Project description:

Although there are no reliable estimates for the numbers of active bait diggers in the UK or even at a more regional level, there has been a reported increase in the level and range of commercial bait collection between Tayport and Tentsmuir Point on the Firth of Tay. This area forms part of the Firth of Tay and Eden Estuary SPA/SAC.

The observational and experimental work suggested that the level of bait digging was unlikely to have a major impact on the ecology of the system. Disturbance by bait digging activities may however have indirect affects such as seal and bird disturbance, and may be a nuisance to the local community. The survey suggested that

there is no immediate concern, but that if the intensity and area of the bait digging activity increases, then the system may become damaged. Monitoring and assessment of the actual bait digging activity was recommended and if the scale of this increases, further field surveys and impact assessments are recommended.

Key elements:

Within this programme, SERG:ES took sediment cores for macrofaunal analysis and sediment particle size characterisation. Macroinvertebrate data was analysed using PRIMER statistical software to report species abundance and distribution patterns. The effects of bait digging were assessed in a controlled *in situ* experiment.



A view across Tayport mudflats
