



MarLIN

Marine Information Network

Information on the species and habitats around the coasts and sea of the British Isles

Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*)

MarLIN – Marine Life Information Network
Marine Evidence-based Sensitivity Assessment (MarESA) Review

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The Marine Life Information Network, Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom.

Please note. This MarESA report is a dated version of the online review. Please refer to the website for the most up-to-date version [<https://www.marlin.ac.uk/species/detail/2095>]. All terms and the MarESA methodology are outlined on the website (<https://www.marlin.ac.uk>)

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Cod photographed in an aquarium tank.
 Photographer: Sue Scott
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See online review for
 distribution map

Distribution data supplied by the Ocean
 Biogeographic Information System (OBIS). To
 interrogate UK data visit the NBN Atlas.

Researched by	Jessica Heard	Refereed by	Admin
Authority	Linnaeus, 1758		
Other common names	-	Synonyms	-

Summary

🔍 Description

Mature *Gadus morhua* grow to approximately 120 cm in length, weighing around 12 kg, however, larger fish have been recorded. Age of maturity varies regionally but is usually between one and fifteen years. Colour is variable depending on habitat but most are spotted with white bellies. Atlantic cod are commonly found on sandy bottoms and are often mottled brown in appearance. This is a heavy and powerful fish with three dorsal and two anal fins, all slightly rounded, and either a square or rounded tail fin. The upper jaw overhangs the lower and the long chin barbel is equal to the eye in diameter. A prominent curved, white (or very pale) lateral line makes this species easy to identify.

📍 Recorded distribution in Britain and Ireland

Atlantic cod are found all around the coasts of Britain and Ireland, as far south as the Bay of Biscay and to the north Barents Sea.

📍 Global distribution

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🏠 Habitat

Cod prefer cold temperate waters and can be found from the shoreline down to depths of 600 m.

↓ Depth range

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Q Identifying features

- Two anal fins and three dorsal fins.
- The upper jaw overhangs the lower jaw and there is a long chin barbel.
- The colour varies with habitat but many have brown to red spots on back and sides.
- Has a highly distinguishable curved, pale lateral line.

🏛️ Additional information

Atlantic cod is one of the UKs most popular commercial species and as a result has been fished extensively in UK waters. They can often be found in large, dense shoals, making them an easy target for fishermen.

Atlantic cod are productive breeders. Spawning occurs between February and April when 3 to 6 million buoyant eggs are released, often forming great swarms that can be transported miles by ocean currents before hatching after 12 days. The larval stage of this species is also planktonic and will be carried by currents for up to 2 months before settling on the seabed where the Atlantic cod spend most of their life (Dipper, 2001).

Young *Gadus morhua* feed mainly on copepods but become increasingly dependent on fish as they age, eating the likes of herring, capelin, haddock and even other cod (Dipper, 2001; Wheeler, 1969).

✓ Listed by



🔗 Further information sources

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