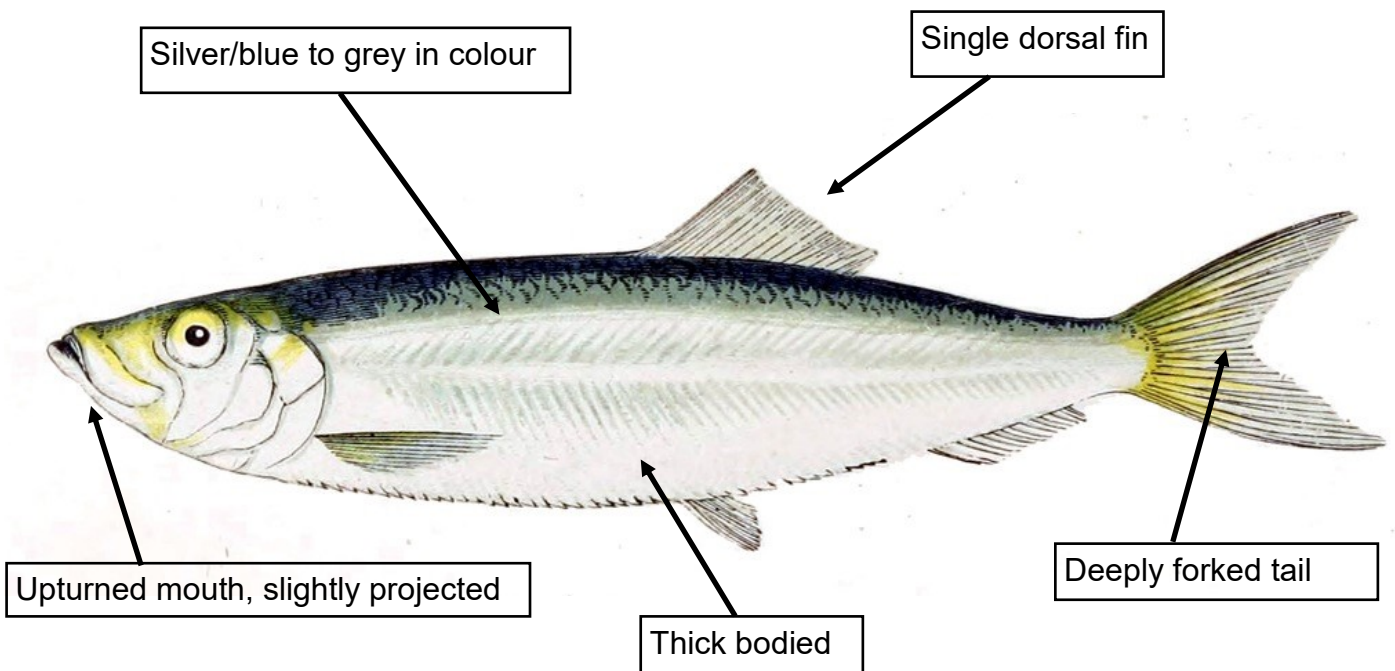




Clupeidae

Introduction

Clupeidae (includes pelagic species, such as sprat and herring) are important food source for seabirds. Similarly to sandeels, sprat and herring feed on copepods, however while herring prefer to feed on larger cold-water copepods like *Calanus finmarchicus* (the same species sandeels feed on), sprat demonstrates a preference for smaller warm-water zooplankton species such as *Temora longicaudata*. This makes sprat less vulnerable to rising sea temperatures and an important alternative prey in areas where sandeels have declined.



Diagnostic Features

- ◆ The main characteristics include overall **silvery to grey appearance** with a small dorsal fin located near the mid point of the body.
- ◆ Pelvic fins are located close to the dorsal fin base.
- ◆ Clupeids can range from 2-75cm in length with sprat up to 16th cm and herring up to 40cm.
- ◆ Both of these species have a **deeply forked tail**, a **thick bodied appearance**, **rigid shape** (not floppy) and an **up-turned mouth**.

References: Henderson, P. A., Somes, J.R . 2015. *Identification Guide to the Inshore Fish of the British Isles*. Pisces Conservation . RSPB, 2017. Project Puffin Diet Photo ID Guide

Photo Credits: European Sprat by Gervais and Boulart

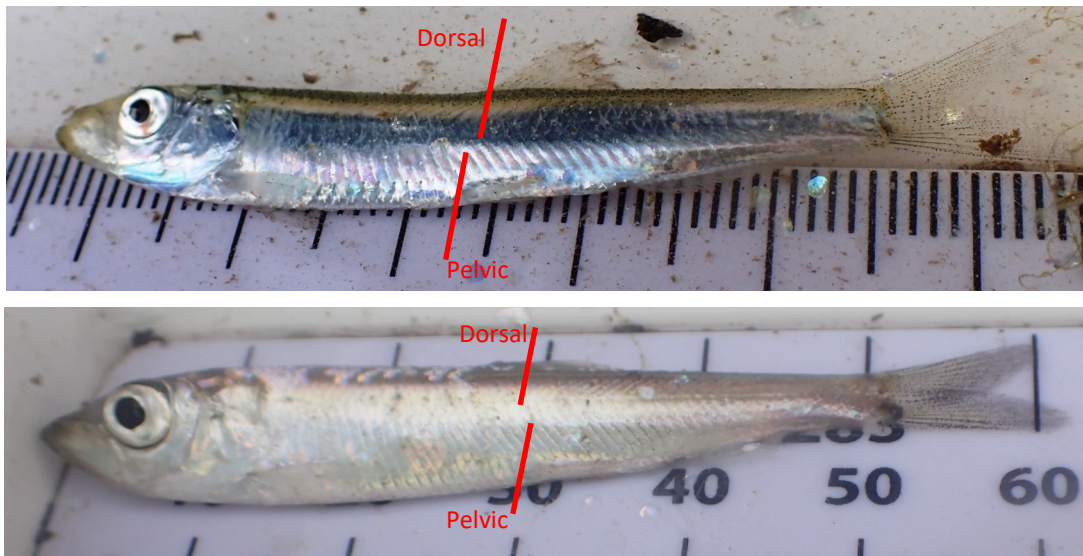
Tern Prey ID guide compiled by Chantal Macleod-Nolan, RSPB on behalf of the Roseate Tern LIFE Recovery Project

Comparison of Clupeidae Species

Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) and juvenile herring (*Clupea harengus*) can easily be confused with each other, especially when held in a tern's bill. The main differences between the fish include:

Colouration: Sprat have a dark green-blue back with silver sides and belly whereas juvenile herring have a dark blue back from head to tail. As result sprat can sometimes look more grey along the back.

Position of pelvic and dorsal fins: Look at the relative position of the dorsal and pelvic fins - in herring the origin of the pelvic fin is set back a little from the origin of the dorsal fin, whereas in sprat the two fins are aligned (or the pelvic fin can be slightly in front).



Additional features:

Eye: The eye of the herring is proportionally larger than that of sprat.

Keel: The scales on juvenile herring feel quite smooth whereas on sprat, the scales on its keel point backwards meaning it feels sharp and rough if a finger is stroled along the keel towards the head.

Size*: Herrings can group up to 40cm in length whereas sprat typically reaches about 13cm in length (though exceptionally large fish may exceed 16cm).

Important Note

Due to the limited timeframe in observing the prey during provisioning studies and difficulty in identifying to species level, it is highly recommended that the observer ONLY identifies the fish as a clupeid.

*For comparison between larval fish please read the sandeel larvae section of the document

Clupeidae



Clupeidae

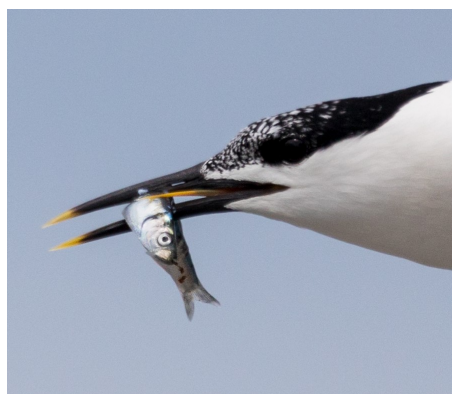
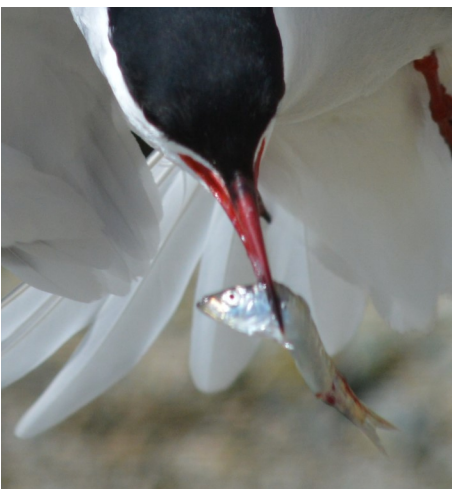


Photo Credits: Little tern by Simon Elliot, Arctic tern by Tom Hibbert, Sandwich tern by Tim Melling, Arctic Tern by Chantal Macleod-Nolan, Little tern by Ben Andrew, Little tern by Simon Elliot, Roseate terns by Brian Burke, Sandwich tern by Daphne Wong, Little tern by Lyn Ibbitson, Sandwich tern by Matthew Barfield