

Army of super-fish is developing in our oceans so they can evade fishermen's nets, new research claims

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Scientists at the University of Glasgow have discovered that some elite fish are getting smarter and know how to wriggle free from being caught by fishermen

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An army of super-fish is developing in our oceans so they can evade fishermen's nets, new research has claimed.

Scientists at the University of Glasgow have discovered that some elite fish are getting smarter and know how to wriggle free from being caught by fishermen.

As more and more fish are being hunted, researchers say this could lead to physiological changes in the species which makes them fitter.

Researchers wanted to find out if some fish were fitter than others and put the creatures to the test.

The study led by Dr Shaun Killen placed 43 wild minnows in a tank with a trawling net and scientists tried to catch the fish, repeating this several times.

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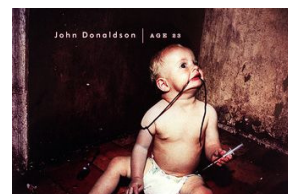
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Some of the more cunning creatures managed to dodge the net each time, but there were still a few fish who couldn't work out how to escape.

Dr Killen said: "Fish being trawled will try to swim at a steady pace ahead of the mouth of the net for as long as possible, but a proportion will eventually tire and fall back into the net.

"Fish that escape trawling are those that can propel themselves ahead of the net or move around the outside of the net.

"The key question is whether those that escape are somehow physiologically or behaviourally different than those that are captured."

He added: "Most trawlers travel at the about same speed as the upper limit of the swim speed of the species they are targeting.

"While trawling nets can be in the water anywhere between ten minutes to several hours, whether or not fish enter the net is generally decided within a few minutes of when they end up at the trawl mouth."

Dr Killen said that humans are "effective predators" and that our selective harvesting of animals is one of the strongest drivers of evolutionary change for animals in the wild.

The research found that strong swimmers with high metabolic rates were more likely to survive.

He said: "Hunting and fishing are selective processes which often remove individuals that, under normal circumstances, may have the highest reproductive potential.

"Available evidence suggests selective harvest can lead to genetic change within wild populations for specific traits.

"Using simulated trawling, our study provides the first evidence better swimming fish, and those with higher metabolic rates, are more likely to escape capture."

The researchers now want to study fish in the wild to see if they get the same results.



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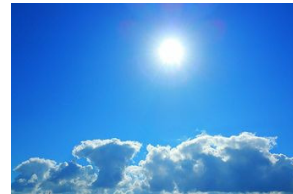
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