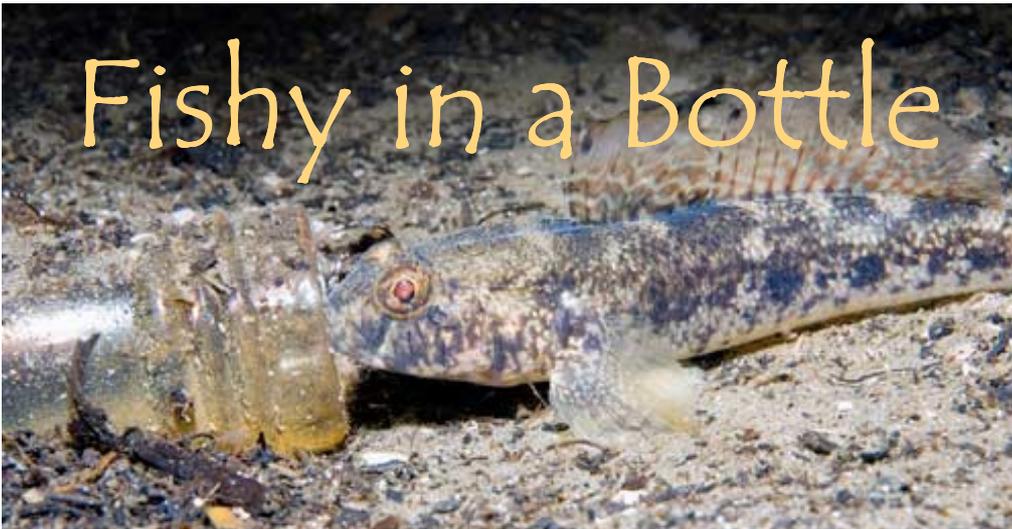


Features

Images courtesy of Paul Kay

Fishy in a Bottle



By Paul Kay

Gobies are mostly small fish (some are as small as 2cm in length when fully grown) and some can be difficult to tell apart. One particular goby that is usually quite easy to identify, especially from a close up photograph, is the Black Goby (*Gobius niger*). Despite its name it is not often very dark in colour, let alone black! Black gobies are curious little creatures, but, because they are small and probably tasty to other animals, they are careful to make sure that they have a refuge if anything approaches which looks dangerous. Usually this means a crevice in which to hide or a boulder to dart under. A burrow in a sandy seabed will also do, or anything else offering safety.

I was taking photographs of gobies one day when one particular black goby caught my attention. He was on the seabed and looking into an old beer bottle that someone had thrown into the sea. Although it might provide a good hiding place, the goby was rather stout and I doubted that it would actually be able to get into the bottle. As I approached the goby decide to try and sure enough it was a bit of a struggle! But after a lot of fishy tail thrashing and some obvious effort, the fish finally disappeared into the bottle.

I waited because gobies are curious as I've said and, sure enough, a couple of minutes later when I swam over to the bottle, there was the Black Goby peering out

of the bottle at me. It was a good place to shelter from danger. It was also probably easier to swim out of than in, because of the taper of the bottle, which should make

exiting less of an effort. Since then I've always looked carefully into bottles when I see them underwater and sometimes find that a fish has taken up residence. This is nothing new because Butterfly Blennies (another smallish fish) have been known to lay and guard their eggs inside old Bovril bottles (the older ones especially, because they had a longer neck than today's) for many years.

A Pretty Picture!

Paul Kay loves taking photographs of marine life, especially those that live underwater. He uses special equipment to keep his camera dry and lots of flashes to light up his subjects! You can check out some of his work on his website www.marinewildlife.co.uk



The Black Goby

Check out "Up Close" on page 12 for more information on gobies.

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