

// SHARK FINNING



What is shark finning?

Many shark species are classified as vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered by the World Conservation Union. Some sharks are targeted for their fins, which are a delicacy in some cultures and can be very valuable. The practice of shark finning means removing fins at sea and throwing the dead carcasses back into the sea. This is not only extremely wasteful, but without the carcasses attached it can be difficult to identify which species the fin comes from, increasing the risk of endangered and prohibited species being targeted.

EU legislation

Shark finning is currently banned under EU legislation, but a scheme of derogations allows Member States to issue Special Fishing Permits whereby fishermen may continue to remove shark fins at sea, provided that on landing the ratio of fins to carcasses is no more than 5%. Many scientists argue that this ratio is too high, and could allow more fins than carcasses to be landed.

Scottish ban on shark finning

In 2009, the Scottish Government decided to ban the removal of shark fins at sea without exemption. The Sea Fishing (Prohibition on the Removal of Shark

Fins) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2009 removes the possibility for Scottish vessels to obtain Special Fishing Permits and makes it obligatory for all Scottish vessels to land sharks with fins naturally attached.

The future

Shark finning is banned under EU legislation. Until recently a scheme of derogations allowed Member States to issue Special Fishing Permits whereby fishermen could continue to remove shark fins at sea. This was based on a ratio of fins to carcasses which many scientists argued was too high and could allow more fins than carcasses to be landed.

However in summer 2013 the EU finally agreed to cease issuing these Special Fishing Permits following lobbying from the Scottish and other Governments. We welcome the news that all Member States are now required to meet the same restrictions as Scottish fishermen have had in place for four years, further improving protection for sharks.

Further information

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// THE SHARKS, SKATES AND RAYS (PROHIBITION OF FISHING, TRANSHIPMENT AND LANDING) (SCOTLAND) ORDER 2012



A TAGGED TOPE AT A SCOTTISH SEA ANGLING CONSERVATION NETWORK EVENT © SSACN SHARKATAG 2010

Shark protection in Scottish waters

In 2012, Marine Scotland introduced legislation to offer extra protection to sharks, skates and rays in Scottish waters following discussions with the recreational sea angling community

Although recreational sea anglers target these species, they take a keen interest in conservation and most use the 'catch and release' method to fish - where the fish is returned to the sea unharmed after being caught. Sharks, skates and rays have a high survivability rate compared to other species.

In addition, recreational sea anglers operate tagging schemes and collect valuable data on these vulnerable species.

Tope protection

Tope is classified as a vulnerable species on the World Conservation Union's red list. However, there is currently no protection under EU legislation for Tope caught in Scottish waters by commercial or recreational fishermen.

The Sharks, Skates and Rays Order 2012 prohibits any Scottish or UK commercial vessel from fishing for Tope in Scottish waters. There is no by-catch provision, meaning that any tope caught accidentally must be returned to the sea.

Equality amongst commercial and recreational sectors

This new Order will also create equality across sectors. The commercial sector are already banned from landing various species, but the recreational sector are still permitted to land these species. Under the new Order, they will now be required to return them to the sea. Most recreational fishermen already practise *catch and release*, but this Order will strengthen conservation by making it an offence to land the species for trophy value or personal consumption.

The species protected are:

Angel shark	Birdbeak dogfish
Black dogfish	Blackmouth catshark
Common skate	Deepwater catsharks
Frilled shark	Greater lanternshark
Greenland shark	Knifetooth dogfish
Leafscale gulper shark	Longnose velvet dogfish
Porbeagle	Portuguese dogfish
Sailfin rough shark	Six-gilled shark
Spurdog	Undulate ray
Velvet belly	White skate
Kitefin shark	Tope

The recreational prohibition extends only to landing, as the Scottish Government recognises the value in the tagging programmes run by recreational sea anglers, which provide important scientific information.

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