

Fast Facts:

IUCN Report on Conservation Status of Open Ocean Sharks & Rays

Species Snapshots

Hammerhead sharks *Sphyrna* spp

IUCN Red List status:

- Scalloped hammerhead *Sphyrna lewini*: *Endangered* Globally
- Great hammerhead *S. mokarran*: *Endangered* Globally
- Smooth hammerhead *S. zygaena*: *Vulnerable* Globally

Fast Facts:

- These semipelagic sharks are widely distributed in coastal and continental shelf waters in warm-temperate and tropical seas.
- Hammerheads are subject to intense fishing pressure in nearshore fisheries as juveniles and in both shelf fisheries and high seas fisheries as adults, by national and international fleets.
- Hammerhead fins are highly desired for shark fin soup. Millions of hammerheads end up in the Hong Kong fin market each year.
- Hammerhead meat is often considered unpalatable so hammerhead sharks are often “finned”.
- Scalloped hammerheads form large schools around seamounts and oceanic islands, making them particularly vulnerable to targeted fisheries.
- Hammerheads suffer high mortality (90%+) from capture, so finning bans and protected species status are not sufficient to rebuild and conserve their populations.

Declines in Abundance:

- Northwest and Western Central Atlantic: 89% since 1986.
- Mediterranean Sea: >99% since the early 19th century.
- South Africa: 64% for scalloped hammerhead, 79% for great hammerhead from 1978-2003.
- Eastern Atlantic: 80% decline of great hammerhead.
- West Africa: landings of great hammerheads have collapsed.

Giant devilrays *Mobula mobular*

IUCN Red List status: *Endangered*

Fast Facts:

- Giant devil rays are found mainly in deep, offshore waters of the Mediterranean Sea.
- This species has a relatively small range compared with other oceanic pelagic species.
- Giant devil rays produce only a single pup per litter (either annually or biennially).
- These rays suffer high mortality from bycatch by driftnets, longlines, traps, and purse-seines.
- The giant devil ray is the only oceanic pelagic shark classified by IUCN as *Endangered*.
- Giant devil rays are legally protected by only Croatia and Malta, despite being listed under Annex II of the Barcelona Convention for Protection of the Mediterranean, an action taken to promote strict protection, roughly a decade ago.

Porbeagle shark *Lamna nasus*

IUCN Red List status:

- *Vulnerable* Globally
- *Critically Endangered* off Europe
- *Endangered* off the Atlantic coasts of the US and Canada

Fast Facts:

- The porbeagle shark is found in coastal and offshore temperate waters of the North Atlantic (separate east and west populations) and the Southern Hemisphere where it is circumglobal.
- Unlike most other sharks, porbeagles have been intensely targeted since the 1920s.
- Porbeagles are sought for their high-quality meat, and also used for leather, liver oil, fins and fishmeal.
- An intense Northeast Atlantic fishery took off in the 1930s and collapsed by the 1960s.
- At the time, worldwide porbeagle landings were 10 times what they are today.
- With the collapse of the Northeast Atlantic population, targeted fishing shifted to the Northwest Atlantic, where most of the population was removed in just six years.
- Targeted fisheries resumed in the early 1990s, this time by Canadians, and again collapsed.
- Canadian catches in 1995 peaked at 1,395t, but declined by almost 90% to 146t by 2003.
- As a result, the Northwest Atlantic population fell by as much as 89% and is now under a recovery plan that spans many decades.
- Today, Canada and France not only allow but promote their targeted fisheries for porbeagles.
- Spain takes porbeagle sharks from the North Atlantic as well as the Pacific and Indian Oceans.
- The Committee on Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada declared porbeagle *Endangered* in 2004 and advised protection; fisheries officials rejected this proposal for economic and monitoring reasons.
- The first EU fishing limit for porbeagle was not established until 2008.
- In 2008, scientists called for a prohibition on landing Northeast Atlantic porbeagle. The European Commission proposed a zero 2009 EU quota, but France secured an EU quota reduction of just 25%.

Shortfin mako *Isurus oxyrinchus*

IUCN Red List status:

Vulnerable Globally

Critically Endangered in the Mediterranean Sea

Fast Facts:

- The shortfin mako is a coastal and oceanic shark found in temperate and tropical seas around the world.
- Shortfin makos are frequently taken as bycatch in longline and gillnet fisheries targeting tunas and billfish, usually second only to blue sharks in the shark bycatch of these fisheries.
- The shortfin mako is also considered the most widely targeted pelagic shark, sought by both commercial fleets and anglers.
- Makos are widely valued for their high quality meat (fins and skin are also used).
- Scientists estimate that nearly a million makos a year end up in the Hong Kong shark fin trade.
- The vast majority of reported shortfin mako landings (76%) were taken from the Atlantic (mainly by Portugal, Spain, Namibia and South Africa), 17% from the Pacific (by Chile, Spain and the U.S.) and 7% from the Indian Ocean (by Spain, Portugal and China).
- The shortfin catch in the western Mediterranean swordfish longline fishery consists almost exclusively of juveniles, suggesting that this region may be a nursery ground.
- Shortfin makos and other pelagic sharks are a secondary target of an illegal Moroccan swordfish large-scale driftnet fishery in the Alboran Sea; catch rates and mean mako weight are declining.
- In the U.S. Atlantic, recreational landings for shortfin mako peaked at 80,000 fish in 1985 and have declined since: fewer than 3,400 were reported taken in 2006. These recent landings rival those of the U.S. commercial fleet in the same waters.
- Because of low reproductive rates and vulnerability to pelagic fishing gear, shortfin makos are among the pelagic sharks at greatest risk for overfishing by Atlantic high-seas fisheries.
- Shortfin makos survive capture on longlines relatively well (66–80% are alive when gear is retrieved), suggesting that catch limits and mandatory release can be effective conservation tools.
- A 2008 assessment estimated the decline of North Atlantic shortfin mako at about 50% since the 1950s.
- Recent biological data indicate that the shortfin mako grows more slowly than previously thought.
- A 2008 listing of shortfin makos under Appendix II of the Convention on Migratory Species aimed to stimulate collaborative conservation efforts among countries, but so far no progress has been made.
- The U.S. and New Zealand are the only countries in the world to restrict mako fishing.