



Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network

To do nothing is not an option

Scotland's politicians are failing sharks

At least eighteen species of Shark occur round the coast of Scotland, from the smaller Lesser Spotted Dogfish to the round bellied Porbeagle Shark and plankton eating Basking Shark.

The feature the majority of Scottish sharks share is their populations are in trouble.

We believe Scotland is failing in its duty to protect sharks and rays in danger of extinction according to the IUCN. FAO, ICES and many NGO's.

The Common Skate, Porbeagle and Spurdog have recently been listed under the UK Biodiversity Plan.

These species have a slow growth rate, high age at first maturity, low fecundity and long gestation period; all of which contribute to a low rate of population increase which in turn, makes them particularly vulnerable to fishing pressure.

None of the sharks have a commercial fishery history, so the Government could help these species without any financial loss or hardship to the commercial fishing industry.

However, these species are highly prized by sea anglers who target them on a catch and release basis.

This sector brings many jobs and £50+ million into rural communities where they are often most needed.

Finning - Fins are cut off the shark whose body is then thrown back into the sea.



In many cases the shark is not dead so it simply sinks to the bottom of the ocean where it dies.

Porbeagle Shark

The Porbeagle has recently being upgraded to critically endangered by the IUCN.

These sharks congregate in the North of Scotland each winter for breeding purposes and this area is considered crucial for the species survival.

They are targeted by commercial longliners, mainly from outwith Scotland, and the barbaric practice of 'finning' still goes on.

The UK states it has always been a leading advocate of the control of shark finning in the EU yet at the same time it essentially condones the practice as it issues special permits which allow 1.5 sharks to be killed for every carcass landed.

The Shark Alliance (SSACN is a member) and many other NGO's believe Scotland should lobby the EU for a cessation of these permits and insist all carcasses are landed whole.

Scotland is doing nothing to protect Porbeagle Shark.

Tope (Soupfin shark)

Tope are classed as endangered by the IUCN .

There is little commercial pressure at the moment in UK waters but that is expected to change as the value increases to supply the rapidly growing market for sharkfin soup.

By the time that protection measures could be put in place, the damage may have been already done.

Their numbers are declining rapidly due to the fishing efforts of the French and Spanish. We would like to see Scotland lobbying for EU protection before they go the same way as the Spurdog.

With legislation proposed in Westminster, a ridiculous situation is developing where it will be legal to kill Tope in the Scottish side of the Solway but illegal on the English side.

Now is the time to act before any further pressure is applied to the already diminished stocks, but as yet

Scotland is doing nothing to protect Tope.



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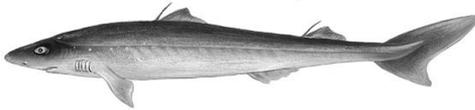
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Spurdog

The WWF has listed Spurdog in its top ten list as a species most likely to face extinction, alongside Polar bears, Giant Panda and Siberian Tigers.

Spurdog used to be found in vast shoals all around Scotland, they are now at 5% of the original biomass.

The Spurdog have recently had a five percent bycatch limit placed upon them in European waters but the IUCN, FAO scientific advice suggests the TAC is still too high and there should be a zero catch.



As we believe Lochs Sunart and Etive hold unique populations which could be the springboard for the regeneration of the species, SSACN has entered into a partnership with the Fisheries Research Services (FRS) to run a Spurdog tagging programme.

Lochs Sunart and Etive attract vast numbers of both shore and boat anglers for the Spurdog and the recreational fishery is thought to be worth over £10 million pounds to the local economy.

Hopefully, the ensuing data will be enough to convince the Government that they should take unilateral action and declare these lochs and their surrounding waters nursery areas, protected from commercial exploitation, but as yet

Scotland is doing nothing to protect Spurdog.

Common Skate

Common Skate are classed by the ICUN as being Critically Endangered.

They used to be found in numbers in all EU waters but are now restricted to small localized resident populations in the waters off Scotland's west coast.

The Scottish Government has historically refused to protect Skate because they believe they are a migratory fish.

A tagging programme carried out for the last 25 years by recreational anglers and administered by Glasgow museum indicates this may be only partially true.

The programme has shown that although there may be a shifting juvenile population, the adult breeding stock rarely strays - thus one vessel could eradicate a local population in a matter of weeks.

The common skate tagging programme report showed that on a sample of 946 skate, only 23 of the 230 recaptured skate have moved any significant distance.

The report can be found at

<http://www.catchalot.co.uk/tagging/dec2000.htm>

Scotland is doing nothing to protect Common Skate.

Rays

The Thornback, Cuckoo, Blonde and Spotted Ray stocks are severely depleted throughout the UK.

Many of these rays are already considered locally extinct in South West Scotland.

The Scottish Government should be looking at ways to reverse the rapid decline of the ray species before they too join the growing numbers of critically endangered species.

Defra placed a 200kg daily catch on them in the southern North Sea early in 2008.

The necessary EU legislation is in place, it just needs the Marine Directorate to implement the necessary management tools, but once more, as yet

Scotland is doing nothing to protect Rays

No responsible Government should take such a cavalier approach to conserving these species.

They are being taken to the edge of extinction whilst Politicians and Civil Servants prevaricate.

There should be a "Vision".

To do nothing, should NOT be an option.