



## Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network

### To do nothing is not an option

#### **Failing in its duty of care**

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.

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 over £50+ million into rural communities where they are often most needed.

#### **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.**

#### **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.

#### **Common Skate**

The Common Skate used to be found in numbers all round EU waters; their numbers have now been reduced to small localized resident populations in the deep waters off Scotland's west coast.

The IUCN put the fish as critically endangered yet the Scottish Government has historically refused to protect them 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 more than a few miles - 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.**



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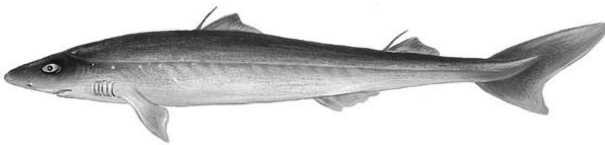
### To do nothing is not an option

#### **Spurdog**

The Spurdog has recently been upgraded to critically endangered by the IUCN.

Like the Common Skate, Spurdog used to be found in vast shoals all around EU waters. Shoals 5 miles across used to be found all over the West Coast of Britain just 20 years ago.

Their numbers have been reduced to less than 5% of their original biomass and like the Common Skate they can now only be found in anything like numbers in a few strongholds in the deep Scottish lochs.



Etive had a heavily targeted Spurdog fishery in the 1990's and the mature fish disappeared. It was over seven years before mature females were caught again.

Hopefully, the necessary steps are now beginning to be taken for the conservation of the Spurdog as SSACN will be working with the Scottish Government in a tagging programme to help develop further information about the Spurdog stocks.

We remain convinced that this will show that the Spurdog in Sunart and Etive are a local resident population and deserve special protection.

We would like to see the Scottish Government take unilateral action and declare these lochs and their surrounding waters designated as a nursery area, protected from commercial exploitation, but as yet

**Scotland is doing nothing to protect Spurdog.**

#### **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.**

#### **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 earlier this year.

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 consider taking such a cavalier approach to species under threat of extinction, but it seems an "out of sight out of mind" attitude prevails.

We believe it is Scotland's moral duty to do its utmost to conserve these species for future generations to enjoy, and that

**To do nothing, should NOT be an option.**