

**SSTP - Phase 2**

**June 2011 - May 2012**

**Final Project Report**

# The Scottish Shark Tagging Programme - Phase 2 project was funded by:



## Supported by:



## & Managed by:



Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network  
A Registered Scottish Charity No; SC039015

Website: [www.ssacn.org](http://www.ssacn.org)

Email: [contact@ssacn.org](mailto:contact@ssacn.org)

Project Website: [www.tagsharks.com](http://www.tagsharks.com)



## *1. Background*

The Scottish Shark Tagging Programme (SSTP), was set up by the Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network (SSACN), an independent Scottish registered charity, in 2009. The programme was developed to provide direct feedback to Scottish anglers, encourage increased participation in the tagging programme within Scotland and to emphasise the conservation issues faced by sharks found in Scottish waters.

With funding secured from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Argyll and the Islands LEADER, phase 1 of the project enabled a full time Project officer in Argyll, James Thorburn, to develop the project. Further details of Phase 1, can be found in the December 2010 progress report available at <http://www.tagsharks.com/reading-room-2>.

With a second phase of funding secured from SNH and the Argyll and the Islands LEADER programme for phase 2, project co-ordinator, Julie Hope was appointed in June 2011. Additional funding from Dumfries and Galloway LEADER programme and SNH, allowed part time project officer, Lewis Cowie to be appointed in August 2011.

In summary the project aimed to:

- Develop a master database of Scottish tagging data, collected from several sources including the Glasgow Museum and the UK tagging programmes.
- Increase angler participation in the tagging programme; for both local and visiting anglers.
- Provide a free training programme to new and existing anglers and developing this material in line with new developments.
- Increase feedback to anglers and provide timely responses to anglers submitting recapture information.
- Raise awareness and provide a free access to information through our website and Facebook pages.
- Continue to provide free educational visits to local schools.
- Perform basic analysis of the data and provide summaries to anglers, members, funders, government and academics.
- Continue to provide data to academic institutes and individuals and encourage research into elasmobranchs in Scottish waters.
- Increase traffic on the project website and Facebook pages.

## 2. Phase II Summary

The project achieved the following outputs and outcomes:

- Angler participation in the SSTP increased from 192 (Dec 2010) to 270+ (May 2012).
- 19 primary schools and over 341 children in total took part in the educational visits, games and eggcase hunts.
- The number of entries on the database was increased from 2390 (Dec 2010) to 5027 (Dec 2011), which included the addition of historical data from Glasgow Museum.
- The total number of recaptures on the database was increased from 241 (Dec 2010) to 1130 recaptures (Dec 2011).
- The SSTP's Facebook hits were increased from 20,000 (Dec 2010) to over 72,000 (Dec 2011) - 2012 looks set for another fantastic year with an average of 6-8,000 hits per month.
- The SSTP and SSACN websites continue to grow at an average rate of 4.3% per month.
- Introduction of the new 'tagging guns', updates to educational and training packs and procedures.
- Two open events at the Glasgow Angling Centre were attended, with huge success ([www.tagsharks.com/great-weekend-at-gac](http://www.tagsharks.com/great-weekend-at-gac) and [www.tagsharks.com/sstp-at-the-glasgow-angling-centre-open-day-2011](http://www.tagsharks.com/sstp-at-the-glasgow-angling-centre-open-day-2011)).
- Awareness of the sharks and conservation issues was raised throughout the entire project through various press releases and information leaflets distributed to SSACN members, primary children and the general public. [www.tagsharks.com/reading-room-2](http://www.tagsharks.com/reading-room-2).
- Lewis Cowie undertook a training course to achieve a Level II Coaching Qualification.

### ***3. Phase II Successes***

- Marine Scotland initiated the Common Skate Acoustic Project, which will run until October 2012. It is expected that this data will corroborate the SSTP dart tag data and illustrate that there is a resident population of common skate in the Sound of Jura [www.tagsharks.com/common-skate-acoustic-tagging-project-in-the-sound-of-jura](http://www.tagsharks.com/common-skate-acoustic-tagging-project-in-the-sound-of-jura).
- The SSTP database formed the basis for SSACN's submissions to the Scottish Governments Marine Protected Area (MPA) network. Four out of five of SSACN's 3rd party proposals have been taken through to the next stage (based on common skate populations) and there are high hopes for the Demonstration and Research MPA proposed based on a 'Sea Angling Regeneration Centre'. All proposals are now available in our reading room. [www.tagsharks.com/reading-room-2](http://www.tagsharks.com/reading-room-2).
- In March 2012, the Scottish Government announced new legislation protecting 26 sharks found in Scottish waters. This new Special Statutory Instruments (SSIs) will make landing these fish illegal but allow anglers to continue to fish on a catch and release basis. Campaigning by SSACN, and the work of the SSTP to date, not only lead to the protection of these species, but ensured the interests of recreational sea anglers were considered.
- Based on the work of SSACN, 2 PhD projects were initiated in 2011, at the university of Aberdeen and Glasgow. These projects will look at the population dynamics of common skate, tope and spurdog in Scottish waters.

Due to the successes above, the SSTP were able to announce in April 2012, the completion of their common skate tagging in the Firth of Lorne, Sound of Jura, Sound of Mull and Loch Sunart. Recaptures will still be recorded. A full press release can be found at [www.tagsharks.com/changes-to-common-skate-tagging](http://www.tagsharks.com/changes-to-common-skate-tagging).

### ***4. Phase II Costs and Funding***

The costs incurred in during the project were lower than anticipated. This was due to:

- SSACN paying salaries directly, (with salary costs then reimbursed to SSACN during the next claim period from funders). This impacted cash flow when payments of claims were received later than planned which in turn reduced the balance of funds available for spend on capital purchases.

## 5. Activities

### 5.1 Outreach

The project achieved the following;

341 children from 19 schools, participated in the educational visits which included a short presentation on sharks, marine and outdoor activities, including eggcase hunts, rock pooling, beach cleaning (in Association with the GrabTrust Argyll) and educational games; SNH life size boardgame and the SSTP shark-o-metres.



*Fig 1; pupils from primary in Dumfries on an eggcase hunt with project officer Lewis Cowie*

The 19 groups participating were;

- Park Primary (Argyll) (22)
- Ardchatten Primary (Argyll) (3)
- Four classes within Rockfield Primary (Argyll) (approx 120)
- Dervaig Primary (Argyll) - Isle of Mull School Event 2011 (11)
- Tobermory Primary,P3-4. (Argyll) - Isle of Mull School Event 2011 (13)
- Tobermory Primary,P6-7. (Argyll) - Isle of Mull School Event 2011 (14)
- Iona & Ulva Primaries (Argyll) - Isle of Mull School Event 2011 (9)
- Auchencairn Primary (Dumfries) (16)
- Portpatrick Primary (Dumfries) (27)
- Kirkbean Primary (Dumfries) (18)
- Garlieston Primary (Dumfries) (15)
- Sorbie Primary (Dumfries) (10)
- Drummore Primary (Dumfries) (15)
- Sandhead Primary (Dumfries) (25)
- Lockerbie Beaver Group (Dumfries) (23)



*Fig 2; Pupils from Park Primary, Oban after a beach clean/eggcase hunt, in collaboration with the Grab Trust*



*Fig 3; Eggcase ID posters used in Mull school event for Treasure hunt games.*

Due to the popularity of the educational visits, the educational pack has been updated throughout phase two, and will soon be available on the SSTP website, [www.tagsharks.com/reading-room-2](http://www.tagsharks.com/reading-room-2) for teachers to download for in-house lessons and activities.

SSACN are also in the process of developing an educational outreach programme for secondary schools, focused on Recreational Sea Angling and conservation. Shark tagging material will be developed as part of this sister project. Please keep an eye on our website for further details [www.ssacn.org](http://www.ssacn.org).

## 5.2 Tagging Events

The success of Tagging events continues to grow. A total of three tagging events were held throughout phase II around Scotland.

- Sharktag (June 2011) Event at a glance - 135 anglers, 52 boats, 20 kayakers, 129 fish tagged.
- Spurdog tagathon (Nov 2011) Event at a Glance - 62 anglers, 20 shore fishing, 19 boats, 32 tagged fish, 4 recaptured spurdog (Loch Sunart), many undersized fish recorded and returned untagged in both Loch Etive and Loch Sunart.
- Skate tagathon (April 2012) Event at a glance - Due to the success of the skate database for the sound of Jura area, it was decided that new tagging was no longer required, therefore this event was held as a recapture only event. The event was a huge success with Marine Scotland tags being recovered. [www.tagsharks.com/skate-tagathonday-1](http://www.tagsharks.com/skate-tagathonday-1).



In addition to these successful national events, SSACN have now extended the 'Sharktag' event to Europe. The Royal Dutch Angling Association will be holding their own Sharktag event at Sportvisserij Nederland, on 22th - 24th August 2012. Further details can be found at [www.tagsharks.com/aim-to-improve-smoothhound-knowledge-through-collaboration](http://www.tagsharks.com/aim-to-improve-smoothhound-knowledge-through-collaboration).

## 5.3 Public/Trade Events

The SSTP officers and SSACN volunteers attended the Glasgow Angling Centre (GAC) open weekends in October 2011 and March 2012 where anglers attend from across the UK and beyond. We were able to set up a stand and talk to anglers about the work of the SSTP, signing people up for training sessions, memberships and mailing lists. These events are extremely important as they reach many anglers that may not know about us and visiting anglers from England etc find out about tagging events and tagging in Scotland.

SSACN met with angling legends Mike Thrussell and Paul Young at the October and March Glasgow Angling Centre open weekends, both were very keen to show their support to the SSTP programme.



Lewis Cowie, Shark tagging project officer, SAMS student Chris McCabe, Julie Hope, project co-ordinator and Keen Fisherman Jonathan Taylor from Oban all joined in the tagathon last weekend.

### Anglers out in force for annual spurdog tagathon

ANGLERS were out gathering valuable data on the west coast's spurdog population during the annual tagathon last weekend. From Friday to Sunday, experienced fishermen helped the Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network (SSACN) to catch and tag spurdog in and around Loch Sunart and Etive. The sea lochs of the west coast are important grounds for spawning and other shark species, which in turn play a vital role in the marine eco-system. For the first time as part of the tagathon, David McNair and Julie Hope ran workshops for students at the Scottish Association of Marine Sciences. Donstaffage, so that those who were not experienced at angling and tagging could take part. The sessions covered the basics of safely tagging, how to ensure fish were recorded, tagged and returned to the water quickly and unharmed and practice fishing skills. Chris McCabe, a third year SAMS student, has been using data gathered on spurdogs to analyse population movements. The tagathon is funded by Scottish Natural Heritage as part of the LEADER programme. Data from participants is currently being collected and preliminary findings will be known shortly.

Fig 4; Oban times article published during the 011 Spurdog Tagathon event.

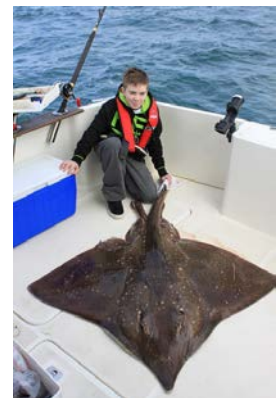


Fig 5; Young Angler Jack, with a 113lb skate.

See the full press releases at ([www.tagsharks.com/great-weekend-at-gac](http://www.tagsharks.com/great-weekend-at-gac) and [www.tagsharks.com/sstp-at-the-glasgow-angling-centre-open-day-2011](http://www.tagsharks.com/sstp-at-the-glasgow-angling-centre-open-day-2011)).

Talking about the work being carried out in Scotland by SSACN and the SSTP, Mike Thrussell said:

*“It’s great to be able to support SSACN and the SSTP in their work to conserve fish stocks and raise awareness of the good work angling can achieve for conservation when united.*

*The tagging programme has been instigated to increase awareness and the protection of sharks in Scottish waters, this has been made possible by the help and contribution of sea anglers and the expectation is that this will continue to grow over coming years. “*

*“It is my hope that as many anglers as possible get involved in this excellent programme as I feel it is vitally important to the future of sharks and to the preservation of recreational sea angling as a whole!” – Mike Thrussell*

#### 5.4 Training Sessions

Several individual and group training sessions have been held across Scotland, during and outwith the above tagging events. In addition to the angler training sessions held during the Spurdog Tagathon 2011, the Scottish Association of Marine Science (SAMS) in Oban donate boat time on MV Calanus to train some of the students.

Over and above those on the boat, there were several requests from students to get involved and it was decided to run an angling and tagging session for those students wishing to get involved in the tagging but with no or little prior angling experience.

Training Coach David McNair joined Project Officers Julie Hope and Lewis Cowie at SAMS to give a short tagging presentation, before showing students basic rig set ups and taking groups to the shore to get them casting and angling for spurdog themselves.

The sessions were hugely successful and several participants are now volunteers with the SSTP and SSACN. One such volunteer, Jonathan Taylor has recently joined Lewis Cowie in achieving a Dreamstore Level 2 coach qualification which SSACN are using to build a network of coaches for the SSACN outreach program.



Fig 6: Lewis Cowie, with Gordon Goldie and Paul Young at the GAC event.



Fig 7; Training Coach David McNair, showing students at SAMS, tagging procedures.



## *6.0 The Future of the SSTP*

Due to our past successes, the SSTP has been successful in gaining phase 3 funding from Scottish Natural Heritage (50%), with the hope that a recent application to Dumfries and Galloway LEADER will secure match funding. This will support phase 3 of the project and allow Project officer, Lewis Cowie to continue and develop the project in South West of Scotland. The aims are to target new species, and involve many more shore anglers in the project.

We would once again like to recognise all our members, volunteers and funders for their support during phase 2 of the Scottish Shark Tagging Programme.

# *Thank you!!*

