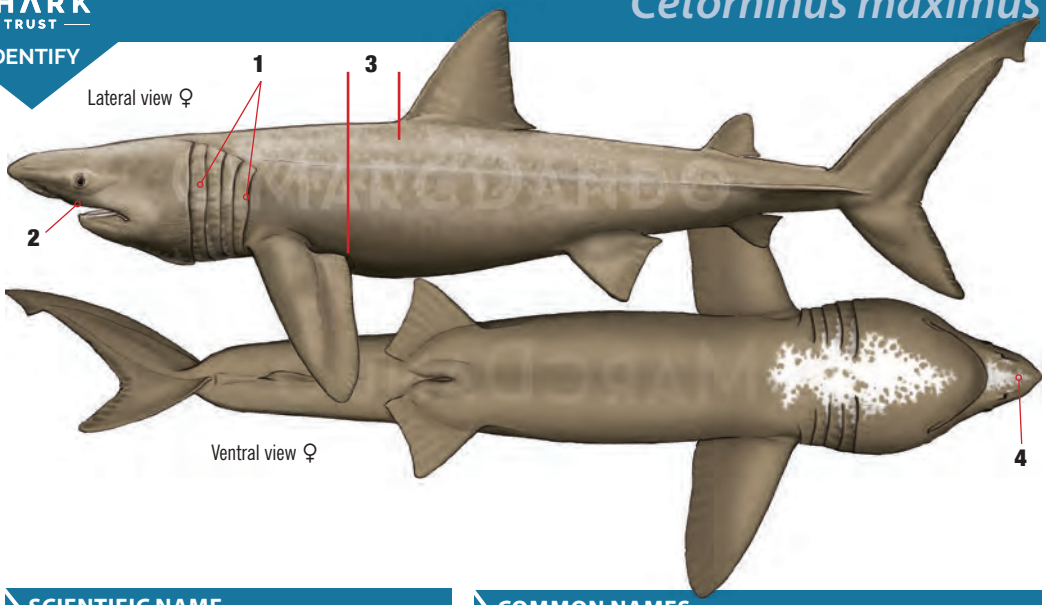
SHARK TRUST

IDENTIFY

BASKING SHARK
Cetorhinus maximus

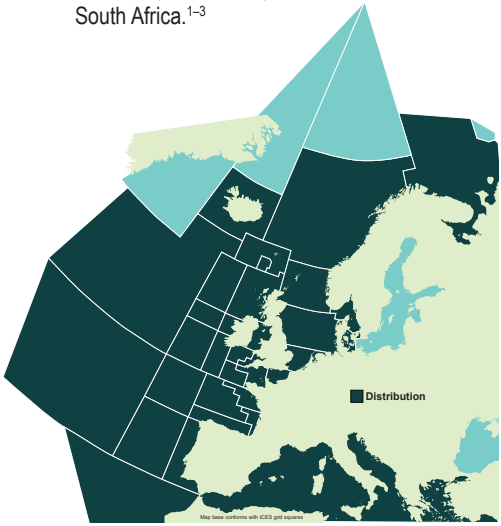


SCIENTIFIC NAME

Cetorhinus maximus (Gunnerus, 1765)

DISTRIBUTION

Worldwide distribution in temperate and boreal oceans; also found in deep water below the thermocline in tropical and equatorial waters. Eastern Atlantic from Russia to Senegal, including Mediterranean Sea (reported as far east as Syrian waters), and from Namibia to South Africa.[1–3]



COMMON NAMES

BASKING SHARK, Bone Shark, Elephant Shark, Riesenhai (DEU), Peregrino (ESP), Pélerin (FRA), Squalo Elefante (ITA), Reuzenhaai (NLD), Tubarão-frade (PRT).

IDENTIFICATION AND COLOUR

1 Large gill slits almost encircle head.[1,3]
2 Huge subterminal mouth.[1,3]
3 Origin of first dorsal fin behind pectoral fin trailing edges.[1,3]
4 Pointed snout (juveniles with elongated, bulbous snouts).[1,3]

- Grey, grey-brown, blue-grey to blackish dorsally. Flanks may have lighter linear striping and spots.[1,3]
- Similar, sometimes lighter ventrally. Often irregular white blotches on underside of head and abdomen.[1,3]

SIZE AND BIOLOGY

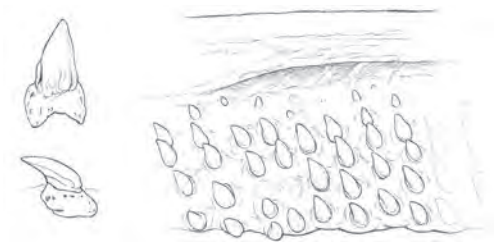
- Birth: 150–200cm.
- Matures: female 690–980cm; male 400–750cm.
- Max. TL: 1200cm.[1,3]
- Age at maturity: female ~18 years; male 12–16 years. Max. age est. 50 years.[2,4]
- Ovoviviparous reproduction; embryos feed on unfertilised eggs (oophagy).[1–3]
- Gestation period est. 1–3.5 years; litter size 1–6 pups.[1–3]
- Passive filter-feeder; feeds on zooplankton incl. copepods, crustacean larvae, fish eggs.[4,5]

BSK Global: EN Europe: EN Med: EN Max. length: 1200cm

Funded by European Maritime & Fisheries Fund

BASKING SHARK

TEETH



- Tiny, hooked and peg-like vestigial teeth, ~5mm in height.[3,4]
- Upper jaw: 200+ rows.[1,3]
- Lower jaw: 200+ rows.[1,3]

SIMILAR SPECIES

White Shark *Carcharodon carcharias*

Porbeagle Shark *Lamna nasus*

Greenland Shark *Somniosus microcephalus*

HABITAT

- Coastal to pelagic, from the surface to >1,200m.[1,2,6]
- Primarily found in water 5–21°C.[3,4]
- Recorded in coastal waters and to the continental shelf edge and slope. Associated with oceanic and thermal fronts, headlands, islands and enclosed bays with strong tidal flow. Observed in inshore waters during the spring/summer.[1,3,8]
- Known to undertake seasonal migrations, including transoceanic and transequatorial movements; frequency and function of these longer-distance movements are not yet fully known.[1–3]
- Aggregates seasonally in temperate continental shelf waters where there is increased zooplankton abundance; also potentially for mating and to give birth.[4,7,8]

CONSERVATION STATUS*

- IUCN Red List: Global: Endangered (2019)
  Europe: Endangered (2015)
  Mediterranean: Endangered (2016)
- Whilst heavily protected, this shark's global abundance is still below historic levels and population recovery is slow.[2]

COMMERCIAL IMPORTANCE

- Historically targeted for liver oil, fins, skin, meat and cartilage; fins remain extremely valuable in global fin trade due to their large size and high quality.[1–3]

MANAGEMENT*

- Subject to prohibitions under the CFP, RFMO and FNA regulations. Additional international regulations apply.

REFERENCES

1 Ebert *et al*. 2013.
2 Sims *et al*. 2015.
3 Ebert, & Stehmann. 2013.
4 Sims. 2008.
5 Sims *et al*. 2005.
6 Gore *et al*. 2008.
7 Skomal *et al*. 2009.
8 Miller *et al*. 2015.

BSK/NEA/2020 *Information correct at time of printing (2020).

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