

POCKET GUIDE

SHARKS, SKATES & RAYS

BRITISH ISLES



SHARK
— TRUST —

The waters surrounding the British Isles are home to ~70 species of shark, skate and ray that inhabit the waters year-round, seasonally or are vagrants. This Pocket Guide provides a fully illustrated guide to 31 species of shark and 18 species of skate and ray most frequently encountered by the fishing industry. It also includes those that have been designated as “data limited” by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), have been listed in a IUCN Red List threat category, or are particularly vulnerable to overexploitation.

Sharks, skates and rays (elasmobranchs) exhibit diverse life history characteristics that make them vulnerable to overfishing. They are typically slow growing, late to mature, have low reproductive rates, and are long-lived. The protection of vulnerable populations, whilst also managing sustainable fisheries, is a balancing act, of which the fishing industry plays a central role. Accurate species-specific data is crucial for effective management. A “data limited” designation, means that not enough information is available to accurately provide population estimates upon which sustainable catch-limits can be based. Improved identification and reporting can reduce the number of data limited species and is key to effective fisheries management.

The aim of this Pocket Guide is to support the quick and accurate recording of elasmobranchs to species level with the objective of improving species-specific data for sharks, skates and rays around the British Isles.

This Pocket Guide is a companion guide to the Shark Trust's *Identification Guide to Sharks, Skates and Rays of the British Isles and Northeast Atlantic* (2020), and the annually updated Commercial Fisheries Advisories.

For more detailed species information visit:
www.sharktrust.org/id

For more detailed management information visit:
www.sharktrust.org/fisheries-advisories

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Divided into sharks and skates/rays, the species cards are listed in alphabetical order by scientific name. We encourage you to arrange the pages in the order that serves you best (e.g. by species most commonly encountered).

KEY ID FEATURES:

Key external characteristics including shape, colour, thorns and distinctive features to check for when identifying the animal.

COMMON NAMES:

The most widely used name is given in bold, followed by additional common names frequently used around the British Isles.

DEPTH RANGE:

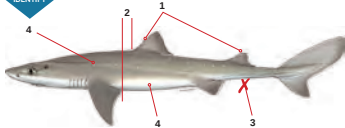
The maximum known depth range for this species.

MANAGEMENT:

A broad summary of whether any regulation/legislation is applicable in the British Isles.

FAO CODE:

3 letter code unique to each species.



Spurdog
Squalus acanthias

DGS

KEY ID FEATURES

- 1 Large, ungrooved dorsal spines.
- 2 First dorsal fin originates behind pectoral fin rear tips.
- 3 No anal fin.
- 4 Grey to bluish grey on top with row of white spots on flanks. Pale below.

COMMON NAMES
SPURDOG, Spiny Dogfish, Piked Dogfish.

DEPTH RANGE
From surface to 1,446m.

MANAGEMENT
Subject to Spurdog Bycatch Management Programme.
Prohibitions apply in some ICES areas.



EN

125cm

IUCN RED LIST STATUS:

European conservation status.

MAXIMUM TOTAL LENGTH:

Measured from the tip of the snout to the tip of the tail.

In the British Isles, many shark species are subject to management under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)*, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMO) regulation, and national legislation e.g. the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in England and Wales, or the Scottish Elasmobranch Protection Order.

All sharks caught by UK and EU fishing vessels are subject to Regulation (EU) 605/2013 which requires that **fins remain naturally attached** to the body until first point of landing, easing enforcement and aiding identification.

Contact the Shark Trust or your regional Marine Management Organisation (MMO) office for more information.

*Includes all UK registered vessels during Transition Period ending 31st December 2020.

CONSERVATION STATUSES

IUCN RED LIST CATEGORIES

NE

Not Evaluated:

not yet evaluated against IUCN Red List criteria.

NT

Near Threatened:

close to qualifying for a threatened category in the near future.

DD

Data Deficient:

inadequate information exists to make an assessment.

VU

Vulnerable:

high risk of extinction in the wild.

LC

Least Concern:

low risk of extinction.

EN

Endangered:

very high risk of extinction in the wild.

CR

Critically Endangered:

extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.

ABOUT SHARKS

Sharks, skates and rays belong to the class Chondrichthyes, which contains over 1,200 species. They are distinguished from bony fish (teleosts) like tuna and cod, by their strong yet flexible cartilaginous skeletons.

Sharks can be characterised by their typically torpedo shaped body (although some have a flattened torso e.g. angel sharks) and 5–7 uncovered gill slits located on each side of the head.

Males can be distinguished from females by the presence of a pair of elongated claspers positioned beneath the pelvic fins; these may be difficult to see in juvenile males.

Their slow life history characteristics are similar to that of mammals (slow growth, late to mature, produce few young, long-lived), meaning they have a low resilience to human impact.

ABOUT SKATES AND RAYS

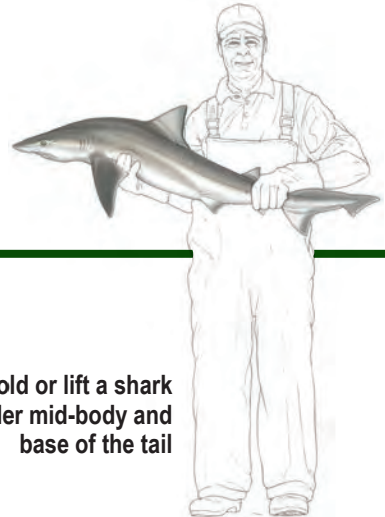
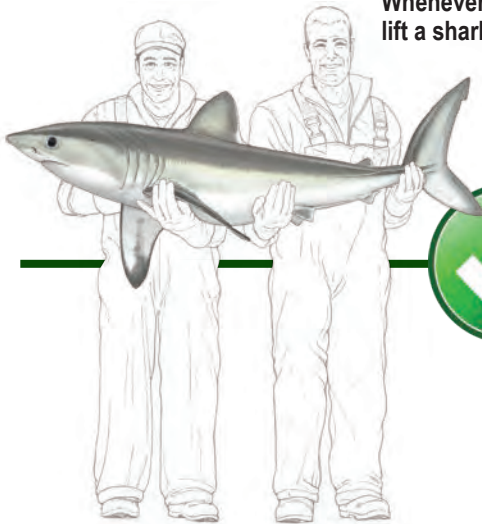
Skates and rays are flat bodied cartilaginous fish. The mouth, nostrils and gill slits are located on the under-side of the body, whilst the eyes and spiracles are located on the dorsal side. As with sharks, males can be distinguished by the presence of a pair of elongated claspers positioned beneath the pelvic fins.

The shape, size and demersal nature of many species of skate and ray make them particularly vulnerable to capture by a variety of fishing gears. They can also be notoriously difficult to identify, due in part to the numerous colour morphs some species exhibit. This poses a challenge when identifying to species level.

In the UK and Europe, species with long snouts (e.g. White Skate) are known as skates whilst those with shorter snouts are usually misnamed as rays (e.g. Spotted Ray), when in fact all species of the family Rajidae are skates. The key difference is that true skates produce eggcases (oviparity) whereas true rays give birth to live young (viviparity).

SHARK HANDLING GUIDE

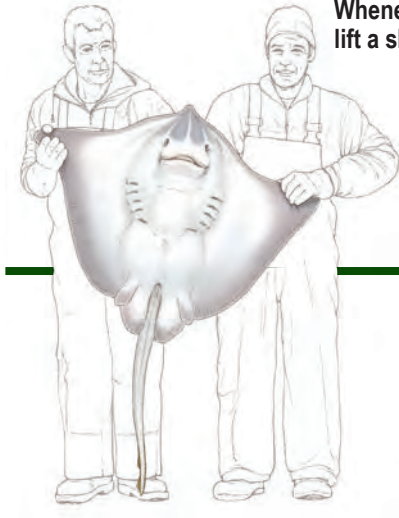
**Whenever possible,
lift a shark to move it**



**Hold or lift a shark
under mid-body and
base of the tail**

SKATE/RAY HANDLING GUIDE

**Whenever possible,
lift a skate or ray to move it**



**Hold or lift a skate or ray
under mid-body
and base of the tail**



USEFUL INFORMATION

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCA)

For the contact details of your regional IFCA visit:

www.association-ifca.org.uk

Marine Management Organisation (MMO)

For advice on shark, skate and ray landing and sales restrictions and for the contact details of your regional MMO visit:

www.marinemanagement.org.uk

MMO helpline: 0300 123 1032

The information within this guide is correct at time of printing (2020). As research evolves and IUCN conservation statuses are reassessed, we will endeavour to update online versions of this resource.

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SHARK

TRUST

Safeguarding the future of sharks, skates and rays through positive change. We achieve this through science, education, influence and action.

CONTACT US

The Shark Trust
4 Creykes Court
The Millfields
Plymouth
Devon, PL1 3JB
UK

+44 (0)1752 672020

www.sharktrust.org