

General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)

Elasmobranch Conservation Progress & Priorities

Sharks, skates, and rays (elasmobranchs) deserve special conservation focus because low reproductive capacity leaves most species exceptionally vulnerable to overexploitation. Mediterranean elasmobranchs are particularly beleaguered. International and domestic fisheries management improvements are urgently needed to protect these vulnerable species from overfishing and finning.

In 2012, the GFCM banned retention of the 24 species of exceptionally vulnerable Mediterranean elasmobranch species listed on Annex II of the Barcelona Convention. Implementation of this measure (GFCM/36/2012/3) through domestic regulations, however, has been lacking.

The Shark League has been working toward the following under the GFCM:

- Measures to improve elasmobranch catch reporting
- Full domestic-level implementation of GFCM/36/2012/3 (to protect 24 species), and
- A stronger ban on finning (slicing off a shark's fins and discarding the body at sea).



Recent Progress

The following actions taken over the last two years represent significant progress for Mediterranean elasmobranch conservation:

- Increasing attention to Parties' compliance with respect to GFCM/36/2012/3, including a GFCM requirement for reporting on national implementation, and a new FAO species identification guide that flags GFCM-listed elasmobranchs
- A proposal from the European Union (EU) to facilitate improved enforcement of the GFCM shark finning ban by requiring that sharks be landed with fins attached
- Domestic prohibitions on retaining listed elasmobranch species adopted by the EU (all 24 species), Turkey (11 species), Lebanon (10 species), and Albania (3 species).



Species covered by GFCM/36/2012/3

Shortfin Mako	<i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i>	CR
Porbeagle	<i>Lamna nasus</i>	CR
Smooth Hammerhead	<i>Sphyrna zygaena</i>	CR
Angular Rough Shark	<i>Oxynotus centrina</i>	CR
Sawback Angelshark	<i>Squatina aculeata</i>	CR
Smoothback Angelshark	<i>Squatina oculata</i>	CR
Angelshark	<i>Squatina squatina</i>	CR
Sandy Skate	<i>Leucoraja circularis</i>	CR
Maltese Skate	<i>Leucoraja melitensis</i>	CR
Common Skate complex	<i>Dipturus batis</i> spp.	CR
Spiny Butterfly Ray	<i>Gymnura altavela</i>	CR
Smalltooth Sawfish	<i>Pristis pectinata</i>	CR
Common Sawfish	<i>Pristis pristis</i>	CR
White Shark	<i>Carcharodon carcharias</i>	CR
Sand Tiger	<i>Carcharias taurus</i>	CR
Smalltooth Sand Tiger	<i>Odontaspis ferox</i>	CR
Basking Shark	<i>Cetorhinus maximus</i>	EN
Giant Devil Ray	<i>Mobula mobular</i>	EN
White Skate	<i>Rostroraja alba</i>	EN
Blackchin Guitarfish	<i>Rhinobatos cemiculus</i>	EN
Common Guitarfish	<i>Rhinobatos rhinobatos</i>	EN
Scalloped Hammerhead	<i>Sphyrna lewini</i>	EN
Great Hammerhead	<i>Sphyrna mokarran</i>	EN
Tope Shark	<i>Galeorhinus galeus</i>	VU

Regional IUCN Red List Status: CR = Critically Endangered; EN = Endangered; VU = Vulnerable

Spotlight on Threatened Mediterranean Elasmobranchs

Monitoring compliance of GFCM/36/2012/3 is complicated by exceptionally poor data reporting by most Mediterranean countries. Half of GFCM Parties fishing in the Mediterranean are reporting 97% or more of their elasmobranch landings in aggregate categories (not to the species, genus or family level).

In addition, some Parties have continued to report landings of the most endangered GFCM-listed species (such as Angelsharks in Tunisia, Shortfin Makos in Libya, and Common

Guitarfish in Lebanon). Romania and Bulgaria are the only GFCM Parties that have regulations protecting all 24 GFCM-listed species (through the EU) and don't report landing any. These countries do, however, land (without limits) other elasmobranchs not protected by GFCM (primarily Spiny Dogfish and Thornback Ray).

The GFCM measure does not cover many elasmobranchs that are classified by IUCN as threatened (or Data Deficient).

Endangered and Critically Endangered Mediterranean Elasmobranchs not covered by GFCM/36/2012/3		
Blue Shark	<i>Prionace glauca</i>	CR
Gulper Shark	<i>Centrophorus granulosus</i>	CR
Spiny Dogfish	<i>Squalus acanthias</i>	EN
Bramble Shark	<i>Echinorhinus brucus</i>	EN
Common Thresher Shark	<i>Alopias vulpinus</i>	EN
Bigeye Thresher Shark	<i>Alopias superciliosus</i>	EN
Rough Skate	<i>Raja radula</i>	EN
Shagreen Skate	<i>Leucoraja fullonica</i>	EN
Bull Ray	<i>Pteromylaeus bovinus</i>	EN



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Call To Action

To improve the outlook for exceptionally threatened Mediterranean elasmobranchs, the Shark League urges the GFCM and individual Parties to work immediately toward the following priority actions:

- Continued national implementation of GFCM/36/2012/3, particularly in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey
- Requirements for reporting elasmobranch landings to the species level
- Expansion of the prohibited species list to include all Endangered and Critically Endangered elasmobranchs
- Adoption of the shark "fins attached" landing rule proposed by the EU.

The GFCM has been reporting on Parties' implementation of the elasmobranch protection measure, but the process has not been detailed or rigorous. All but two GFCM Parties claim full domestic implementation of GFCM/36/2012/3 yet many lack basic protections for listed elasmobranchs, and landings of these species could also be masked through widespread reporting in the aggregate. The following table offers a more realistic and grim picture:

Implementation status reported to GFCM	No. of GFCM listed species protected nationally	GFCM Party	Total shark & ray landings (tonnes) 2012-2016	% of shark/ray landings reported in problematic aggregate category
	0	Libya	25,336	99.9
	0	Tunisia	14,594	65
	0	Egypt	8,734	100
	24	Italy	6,983	66
	24	Greece	3,681	100
	24	Spain	3,476	53
	0	Algeria	2,496	99.6
	11	Turkey	1,600	100
	24	Croatia	989	73
	24	France	692	15
	24	Bulgaria	602	0
	24	Malta	399	31
	0	Morocco	375	97
	0	Syria	354	100
	3	Albania	204	100
	24	Israel	180	76
	0	Montenegro	145	100
	24	Cyprus	65	98.5
	10	Lebanon	44	64
	24	Romania	23	0
	24	Slovenia	7	100
	0	Japan	0	0
	24	Monaco	0	0

■ Implementation in progress
■ Implemented
■ No reporting



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