

FAST FACTS: Sharks & Sweden

Sharks & Rays of Swedish Waters:

- At least fifteen species of sharks can be found in Swedish waters; seven are regular visitors.
- Nearly half of the shark species reported from Swedish waters are considered by IUCN to be threatened with extinction.
- The most common shark off Sweden is the spurdog (spiny dogfish or *Pigghaj*), a small, schooling species which used to support huge catches, but is now listed by IUCN as *Critically Endangered*.
- The porbeagle shark is closely related to the great white and is highly prized for its meat as well as its fins. The regional population is also considered *Critically Endangered* due to overfishing.
- The filter-feeding basking shark, the world's second largest shark which can grow to 10 meters, is one of the more common shark species off Sweden.
- The large and mysterious Greenland shark is also reported relatively regularly off Sweden.
- A report of an oceanic whitetip shark in the Swedish Gluumarsfjord in 2004, surprised scientists as this species usually occurs in warm waters (18-24 degrees Celsius) and far offshore.
- Rays found of Sweden include the common skate, thornback ray and common stingray.

Shark & Ray Fishing & Trade:

- In 2006, Sweden had the highest share of overall Baltic shark and ray catches: 177tonnes (t) or 42% of 419t reported. Sweden's catch was slightly higher than Norway's (158t) and twice that of Denmark (81t).
- The dominant species in Swedish shark and ray catches is the spurdog.
- Swedish vessels reported taking 148 t of spurdog from the Baltic in 2006, nearly half of the total (310t) taken from this region.
- Swedish spurdog catches come mainly from the Skagerrak and Kattegat and, to a lesser extent, from the Belts, the Sound, the Western Baltic and Baltic Proper.
- Swedish vessels also landed 13t of other sharks (not identified to species) and 16t of various rays.
- Swedish anglers also fish for sharks for recreation.
- Sweden imported 206 t sharks (mostly spurdog) in 2006. The main source of the imports was Norway (188t), with the remainder coming from Denmark, the Netherlands, France, the Faroe Islands and from as far away as New Zealand.

Protective Regulations:

- Sweden is the only Baltic country to adopt national rules to protect sharks and rays.
- In 2004, Sweden banned fishing and landing of small-spotted catsharks, common skates, thornback rays, porbeagles and basking sharks from Swedish waters (Skagerrak, Kattegat and Baltic Sea).
- In 2007, however, Sweden then secured a 1t share of the new, EU TAC for porbeagle sharks, presumably for animals taken outside Swedish waters.
- In 2008, Sweden prohibited *targeted* fishing for spurdog with nets and longline gear; trawl fishermen must obtain special permits in order to keep spurdog caught incidentally as “bycatch”.
- Swedish anglers are limited to one spurdog during a 24-hour period.

The Swedish Public’s Interest in Sharks:

- The shark tanks are among the most popular attractions at Sweden’s aquariums, such as the Aquaria Vattenmuseum in Stockholm and the Tropicarium in Kolmården.
- Interest among Swedes in swimming with sharks is sufficient to support Swedish ecotourism operations specializing in shark trips. Such companies arrange Swedish language tours to South Africa, the Philippines, Kenya and other places around the world to snorkel and dive species such as thresher, tiger, bull, white and whale sharks.
- *Sigge’s Lagun*, a comic strip about a shark, runs in several regional and local Swedish newspapers and websites, is the subject of at least two books, and supports a sizeable fan base in Sweden.
- The Swedish Elasmobranch Society -- an association for Swedes with an interest in sharks and rays -- has 250 members of scientists, divers, conservationists and young enthusiasts.

The Swedish Government’s Role in Regional Shark Conservation:

- Sweden is the only Baltic country to adopt national rules to protect sharks and related species.
- Still, Sweden holds quotas for *Critically Endangered* shark species for which scientists advise no fishing (spurdog and porbeagle); Sweden must lead to resume Baltic management of spurdog.
- Of all the National Red Lists provided to HELCOM, only the Swedish and German lists contain sharks and rays.
- With the EU Presidency during the second half of 2009, Sweden will set the agenda and preside over key decisions regarding implementation of the EU Plan of Action for Sharks.
- Sweden is a Party to the OSPAR Convention (for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic) which is currently reviewing proposals to list shark and ray species.

The Shark Alliance is urging all Baltic country governments to:

- promote science-based shark and ray fishing limits and protection for endangered species;
- improve the monitoring and assessment of Baltic shark and ray populations;

- facilitate research into effects on cartilaginous fish from Baltic fisheries, salinity and anoxia;
- promote attention to sharks and rays under international treaties and regional bodies;
- take a stand for closing loopholes in the EU finning ban and its national enforcement; and
- engage in the development and implementation of a sound European Plan of Action for Sharks.

In addition, the Shark Alliance is calling specifically on Sweden to:

- Ensure that Baltic spurdog are brought back under EU fishing limits by 2009, and
- Relinquish their EU quota for porbeagle sharks and work to end targeted fishing for this *Critically Endangered* species through a strict EU limit by 2009.