



LET'S SAVE ENDANGERED SHORTFIN MAKO SHARKS!

Photo : ©Charles Hood

MAKO SHARK, WHO ARE YOU?

The shortfin mako shark is the fastest shark in the world (it can reach 70 km/h!). As a «top predator», it eats fish living near the surface or in midwaters of the oceans. Despite some people finding its appearance frightening, it very rarely attacks humans.

Theoretically living in all the oceans of our planet, its growth is slow and its reproduction rate low. Thus, despite its speed, this makes it particularly vulnerable to overfishing and shortfin mako sharks have seen their North Atlantic population collapse over the last thirty years, due to their high commercial value.

Although they receive less media attention than other emblematic species, these sharks are not less threatened! Their collapse threatens marine biodiversity and fishers who depend on it, given their importance in the food chain.

SCIENTISTS WARN US

In 2021, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has updated its "Red List", and the situation is alarming: a third of shark and ray species are threatened with extinction due to overfishing. The shortfin mako is one of the most threatened species: it is classified as «endangered» and is at a risk of complete collapse.

In 2019, the species was listed in Appendix II of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).

Recommendations

According to the most recent scientific advice, if we let fishers kill 500 tonnes of shortfin mako sharks per year, mako populations would only have a 52% chance of recovering by 2070. A fifty-fifty chance in 50 years is not enough!

That is why, in line with scientific advice, a prohibition of retention of all sharks caught dead or alive by fishers remains the only credible solution to save the species.



«The European Union and the international community must act now to protect shortfin mako sharks, marine ecosystems and fishers who depend on them.

Without stronger protection, North Atlantic shortfin mako shark populations are at risk complete collapse, at the expense of fishers and oceans as a whole.»

Caroline Roose



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WHAT DOES THE EU DO?

The European Union is still not doing enough.

International negotiations are ongoing between the 52 member countries of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) to decide on a plan to protect shortfin mako sharks.

However, economic interests for the fishing industry in some of the countries which sell mako sharks make discussions difficult.

The latest data shows that catches in Spain and Portugal have recently increased well beyond sustainable limits and did not include mandatory data on discards of both live and dead sharks.

Yet, over the last few months, the European Commission has continued to oppose a full ban on retention of shortfin mako sharks on board, in contrast to states such as Canada, Gabon, the UK and Senegal, which propose that no shortfin mako sharks be retained on board, either alive or dead.

DISCUSSIONS ARE UNDERWAY

In May 2021, together with 41 MEPs from different political groups, **Caroline Roose** wrote to the European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries asking him to support an immediate prohibition on retention of North Atlantic shortfin mako sharks, without exception, in line with scientific advice.

Negotiations are still ongoing between the EU and other countries, which will meet from 15 November 2021 at the annual ICCAT meeting to take a decision. After years of delay, time is running out. This meeting is a vital opportunity to save the shortfin mako shark.

The only credible solution, as ICCAT scientists recommend, is to prohibit the retention of live and dead shortfin mako on board to significantly reduce the mortality of the species and send a clear message to fishers about the seriousness of the situation.

This ban on retention on board without exception is the priority action. It must be accompanied by complementary measures such as improved shark handling procedures to decrease post-release mortality, or an increase in on-board observers.

Photo : ©Charles Hood



«2021 is the year of biodiversity: we must follow the science and save shortfin mako sharks. We must absolutely avoid negotiating a bad agreement that would neither follow the science nor save this species. This would be a catastrophe.»

Caroline Roose

