

Man's Impact

Despite being protected, Basking Sharks are still negatively affected by man's activities. Basking Sharks commonly display scars from boat collisions, propellers and net entanglement. The Shark Trust is investigating the extent to which Basking Sharks are being affected by these anthropogenic impacts and we are very keen to receive reports and pictures of these incidents, which you can submit through the Basking Shark website – www.baskingsharks.org.

Learning more about how Basking Sharks are affected by man's activities will enable the development of better strategies for protecting the sharks in our waters.



Lobster pot rope on a Basking Shark tail.



Dead Basking Shark washed up in Cornwall.

It is also very important to record any incidents of Basking Shark strandings as it could provide us with vital clues about the shark's biology or cause of death. If you come across a stranded Basking Shark then please report it to the UK Cetacean Strandings Investigation Project on – **0207 449 6672**.

To report any other unusual marine sightings, non-native species or sightings of marine mammals, turtles and jellyfish go to the Marine Life Information Network (MarLIN) website and fill in their online form – www.marlin.ac.uk/rml



Basking Shark fin showing propellor injury.

www.baskingsharks.org

Submitting your records

Submit your photo-identification images online at www.baskingsharks.org to help increase understanding of the biology and management needs of Basking Sharks.

Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime – PAW

To report incidents of disturbance or harassment to a Basking Shark, contact your local Police Wildlife Liaison Officer. See: www.defra.gov.uk/paw/contacts.htm for the contact details of your local officer.



The Wildlife Trusts

There are 47 local Wildlife Trusts across the UK. The Wildlife Trusts are the largest voluntary organisation dedicated to conserving all of the UK's habitats and species, whether in the countryside, in cities or at sea. www.wildlifetrusts.org



Marine Conservation Society

The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) runs the Basking Shark Watch – a UK sighting scheme. To report a Basking Shark sighting, visit the MCS website and fill in the online form: www.mcsuk.org



Responsible Eco-tourism

WiSe Scheme

WiSe (Wildlife Safe) is a scheme set up to deliver training and accreditation for operators of registered passenger and charter vessels who wish to view marine wildlife: www.wisescheme.org



The Shark Trust

The Shark Trust is the conservation charity dedicated to the study, management and conservation of sharks, skates and rays. You can contribute to the future survival of these fascinating yet vulnerable species by adopting a Basking Shark or becoming a member – both of which you can do through the Shark Trust website – www.sharktrust.org



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Basking Sharks



Including
Code of Conduct
Posters



Basking Sharks- Gentle Giants of the Sea

Basking Shark Facts



Illustration by Marc Dando

The Basking Shark is the second largest fish in the sea and a regular visitor to UK waters. Docile plankton-feeders, Basking Sharks are regularly spotted feeding in the surface waters off UK coastlines during the spring and summer months.

So, next time you go to the coast, keep your eyes peeled for the fins of Basking Sharks breaking the sea-surface; you may be lucky enough to see Britain's largest shark!

Name: Basking Shark *Cetorhinus maximus*. *Cetorhinus* is derived from the Greek "ketos" meaning a marine monster or whale and "rhinos" which means nose, while the species name *maximus* is Latin, meaning "great."

Size: Basking Sharks are believed to grow up to 10 metres in length but the average adult length is around 6.5 to 9 metres.

Biology: Poorly known – slow growth rate and late maturity with life expectancy of over 50 years.

Food: Basking Sharks feed passively on zooplankton and are thought to be capable of filtering over 1,800 tonnes of water per hour.

Distribution: Basking Sharks have a circumglobal distribution and are found in temperate waters.

Behaviour: Basking Sharks are pelagic species that are often seen singly or in groups of up to 100 feeding at the surface. Despite their size, Basking Sharks can leap clean out of the water.



Photo-Identification

Photo-identification is a powerful tool for studying sharks in their natural environment.

The European Basking Shark Photo-id Project (EBSPiP) was created to catalogue images of Basking Sharks in order to establish greater understanding of the population size, structure and movements of Basking Sharks around the British Isles and abroad.

It is very easy for everyone to get involved in the project and make a significant contribution to the greater understanding and conservation of Basking Sharks. By taking photographs of the fins or any other characteristic features of Basking Sharks and submitting them to the project you are taking an active role in an ongoing shark conservation effort.

To find out more about the project and to submit your images, go to www.baskingsharks.org



All photos on this page courtesy of Colin Speedie/Swiss Shark Foundation.

Conservation and Protection

Historically, Basking Sharks were heavily fished for their liver oil, meat, fins and cartilage. This, combined with their slow maturity and low reproductive output, has led to Basking Sharks being listed as globally Vulnerable on the IUCN's Red List and Endangered in the Northeast Atlantic and North Pacific.

A Basking Shark at the surface filter-feeding through its gill rakers.



Internationally, Basking Sharks are protected under a number of international agreements such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Appendix II, The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Appendix I and II, and Annex I of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

In British waters, Basking Sharks are protected from capture and disturbance under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and the Countryside Rights of Way Act, making it illegal to intentionally disturb or harass the sharks.

The UK government has made a commitment to conserving some of the UK's more threatened species by creating Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs). The Shark Trust is one of three lead partners for the Basking Shark BAP and has created the attached Code of Conduct to encourage water users to enjoy Basking Sharks safely without causing excessive disturbance or harassment.

More details about the protection and conservation of Basking Sharks both nationally and internationally can be found on: www.baskingsharks.org.



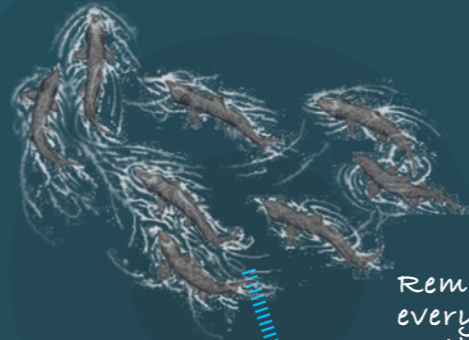
Basking Shark Code of Conduct

BOAT HANDLERS

The following guidelines have been designed to help boat handlers reduce the risk of injuring or harassing Basking Sharks.

Boat control near Basking Sharks

- Restrict your speed to below 6 knots and avoid sudden speed changes.
- When closer than 100 m switch the engine to neutral to avoid injuring sharks.
- Avoid disturbing dense groups of sharks as you may disrupt courtship behaviour.
- Be extremely cautious in areas where Basking Sharks have been seen breaching.
- Jet-skis should stay at least 500 m away from Basking Sharks.
- Remember that for every shark visible on the surface there are likely to be more hidden just below.



Remember that for every shark visible on the surface there are likely to be more hidden below

10m

20m

30m

40m

50m

60m

70m

80m

90m

100m



Don't forget to take pictures of the fins for the photo-identification project



When closer than 100 m switch the engine to neutral

6 knots

Restrict your speed to below 6 knots



Tips

- Take time to observe the direction of movement of the Basking Sharks to anticipate their course – you can then position yourself for the best view.
- Don't forget to take pictures of the fins for the photo-identification project.

Under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) it is illegal to kill, injure or recklessly disturb Basking Sharks in British waters. Any person committing such an offence could face up to 6 months in prison.



www.baskingsharks.org

In partnership with:



Illustrations by Marc Dando



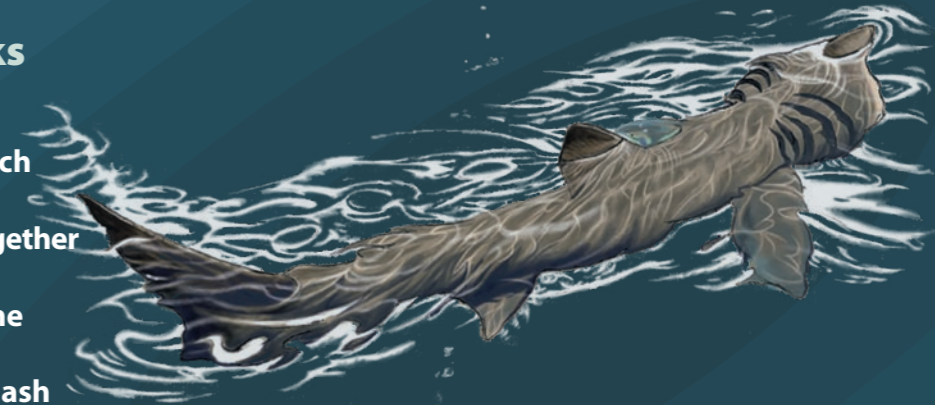
Basking Shark Code of Conduct

SWIMMERS AND DIVERS

The following guidelines have been designed to help swimmers and divers reduce the risk of injuring or harassing Basking Sharks.

Swimming with Basking Sharks

- Do not try to touch the sharks.
- Maintain a distance of 4 m from each shark and be wary of the tail.
- Groups of swimmers should stay together and ideally remain at the surface.
- Restrict the number of people in the water at any one time.
- Take plenty of pictures but avoid flash photography which can scare the sharks. Photograph any characteristic features which may help re-identify the shark in the future.
- Do not use underwater propelled devices.



Remember that for every shark visible on the surface there are likely to be more hidden below

1m

2m

3m

4m

5m

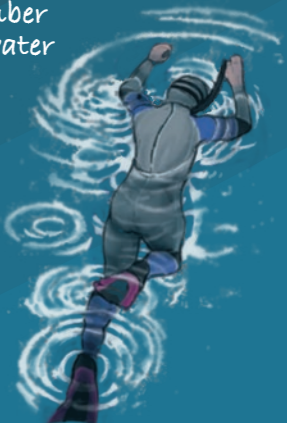
6m

7m

Maintain a distance 4 metres away from each shark



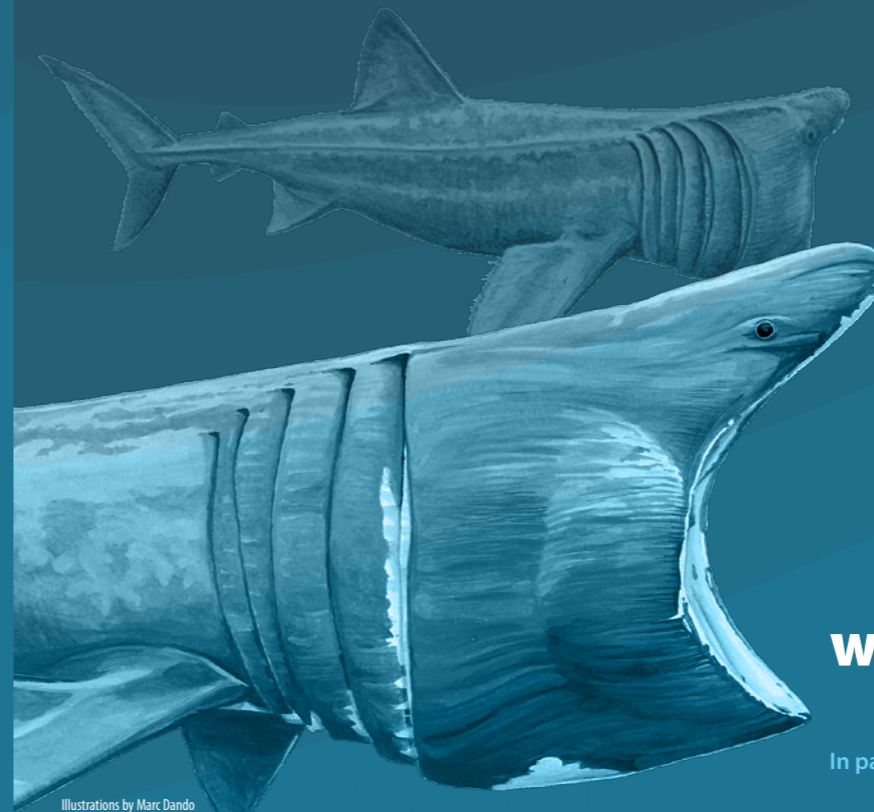
Restrict the number of people in the water at any one time



Tips

- Aim to anticipate the direction of movement of the sharks and enter the water 100 m ahead of the sharks.

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