

## Climate Change and Oceans

### Shark conservation and the Save The Med Foundation

When thinking about climate change and the ocean one's mind does not immediately turn to sharks, however they are vital to the ecosystem and provide an important role in the system that is the ocean. The ocean is one of the biggest carbon sinks in the world and it plays a fundamental role in reducing global warming, and yet we disrespect it and treat it as an infinite resource. Shark conservation is extremely important for the preservation of the oceans and the protection of its ecosystems. While sharks are somewhat feared this does not mean they can be overlooked. Shark populations are dramatically declining from both bycatch and shark-finning. Bycatch are when animals are caught from fisherman not purposely, they get trapped in the huge nets and are killed anyway. Shark-finning is so popular because in china shark fin soup is commonly seen as a symbol of status and thus is a popular dish. With shark-finning, sharks are simply used for their fins and left to bleed out slowly and die. Save the Med is a foundation which focuses on numerous ocean conservation projects, and I wanted to look more specifically at their shark conservation schemes. They have focused on two types of sharks: the nurse hound and the angle shark which are both habitants of the Mediterranean. In general, sharks are having to move from their usual habitats to find more favourable conditions and this will result in higher concentrations of species, and they will be at a higher risk from overfishing.

In my course of Climate Change and Biodiversity we looked at climate changes effect on the oceans and more specifically coral reefs. Sharks have a big effect on coral reefs and help in their preservation, in addition, sharks play such a large role in the food web that any disruption would be of great significance to corals. With the increasing bleaching of coral reefs from the growing warmth and acidification of the oceans it is necessary to preserve them otherwise if we remain on this path in 40 years there will be no remaining. And while millions of people around the world rely on these reefs indirectly many depend on them for daily life and if they disappear so many people will be affected. It is important to recognize that all parts of the ocean are vital to the system and should not be disregarded this is including both corals and sharks.

Works used:

Save the Med website - <https://www.savethemed.org/en/our-projects/plastic-free-balearics/>

Seaspircacy documentary (Netflix) by Ali Tabrizi (2021)

National geographics 'Years of Living Dangerously'. Episode 5 (2016)



# SHARKS

As sharks are at the top of the ocean food chain they play a vital role in the stability of the ecosystem

**WHILE SHARK FINNING IS A MAJOUR ISSUE IT IS NOT AS LARGE AN ISSUE AS BYCATCH**

Since 1970 the scalloped Hammerhead shark has lost 99% of its population - an indication of the decrease in shark populations

## OVER FISHING

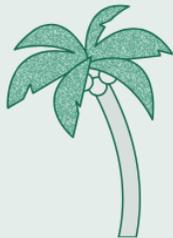
Over fishing is a major issue for shark populations not because of the decrease in food source but due to bycatch. Bycatch is when fishermen catch sharks along with the fish they are aiming for, in result the sharks die anyway.



**AT LEAST 50 MILLION SHARKS ARE CAUGHT AS BYCATCH A YEAR**

## CORAL REEFS

Sharks also play an important role in keeping coral reefs alive. While they still help regulate the food chain, they also reduce disease, and help cycle nutrients. Coral reefs are vital to our world and it is predicted that by 2050 they will no longer exist.



# THE 4 ASPECTS OF SAVE THE MED

## MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Focusing on the Balearic sea, Save the Med aims to select specific areas in this sea to protect and conserve. They will use scientific research and educational innovation to help in this process.

**LESS THAN 8% OF THE WORLD'S OCEANS ARE PROTECTED**

## SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

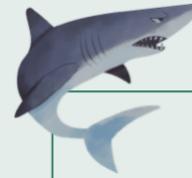
This research is to help understand endangered or species with a risk of endangerment in order to help and protect them in the future. The shark conservation project is under this branch.

## EDUCATION

Education is one of the most vital tools in the fight against climate change, raising awareness is necessary. Save the Med focus on education with plastic pollution this is one of the largest issues in global warming with the oceans now consuming masses of plastic, this is mostly fishing equipment but everyone needs to greatly reduce their usage of single-use plastic.

## PLASTIC FREE BALEARICS

Again plastic pollution and plastic waste are some of the most prominent issues especially in relation to ocean conservation. Save The Med is working with companies in the Balearics to find alternatives to plastic and reduce single-use plastic consumption.



# SHARK CONSERVATION

A SAVE THE MED PROJECT

## THE NURSE HOUND AND THE MEDITERRANEAN ANGEL SHARK

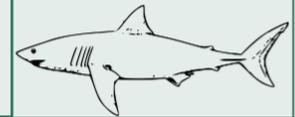
## The Nursehound shark

**SCYLIORHINUS STELLARIS**

This shark is at risk of extinction therefore it is being protected in the Balearic islands. Save The Med has begun a project in order to preserve and increase the population of this shark.

## WHAT IS THEIR PLAN?

A two step project with education and captive breeding. They plan to generally educate about the importance of sharks in the Balearic sea as well as the threats they are facing



## MEDITERRANEAN ANGEL SHARK

Sharks in the Mediterranean are prone to being endangered because their size and living in coastal waters. Fishing is a concern for their well-being. 3 species of the Angel shark are critically endangered. The two main threats which are being tackled in the program are fisheries and habitat degradation. The program also is trying to introduce legislations to add further protection.



**HUMANS KILL AROUND 11,000 TO 30,000 SHARKS EVERY HOUR**

Sharks are a vital aspect to the oceans ecosystem, the damage we are creating is extreme.

