



**The Scottish Sea
Angling Conservation
Network**



**PRESS RELEASE -
IMMEDIATE USE**

Sea angling conservation group launches national shark tagging programme

Anglers gathering data to help protect Scotland's sharks

The Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network (SSACN - www.ssacn.org) today announces the launch of the Scottish Shark Tagging Programme (SSTP - www.tagsharks.com) which will provide a central location for gathering the data necessary to fight for the protection of the shark, skate and ray species found within Scottish coastal waters.

Over the past few years, the stocks of many species of shark in Scottish waters have become severely depleted and the SSACN has long campaigned for Scottish governments to provide real leadership outside the commercial sector and work with them to develop programmes aimed at regenerating the stocks of interest to recreational sea anglers.

So far there has been a high degree of reluctance to act, though now the EC has recently adopted a Community Plan Of Action for sharks which places the emphasis on the member states to gather data for a deeper understanding of sharks & their role in ecosystems and fisheries, there may be additional pressure to do so.

"The SSTP programme will help fill many of the serious gaps which remain in our understanding of shark biology" said **Ian Burrett, SSACN's Project Director**, *"Tagging is one of the few non-destructive assessments of sharks available and will help provide some of the much needed data for species migrations, growth rates, stock populations, make-up and fluctuations."*

The SSTP will initially combine the current Common Skate and Tope data gathering efforts of SSACN and other groups, and then extend them to include additional species such as Bull Huss, Spurdog and Rays. The resultant data will be made available via an interactive website to allow immediate feedback regarding previous captures, distances travelled etc.

Jane Dodd, Marine Project Officer for SNH in Oban said: *"I'm delighted that all the data on the sharks and rays caught by recreational anglers in Scotland will be held in one place. That way we can make sure the data is as complete as possible to*

learn the most about the species and that the anglers get some feedback on the great work they are doing."

SSACN will be running a series of special tagging events each year to promote the tagging programme and to raise the awareness of the need for shark protection.

Already planned for June 13th -15th this year is Sharkatag 2009 (<http://www.ssacn.org/sharkatag/>) which will see over 200 anglers tagging sharks each day in the Solway; planning is in progress for Tagathon 2009 which building on last years successful event, will be held around Loch Sunart in Autumn and where the focus will be on Spurdog.

Shark Trust Director of Conservation Ali Hood added: "*The Shark Trust believes the angling community can be a valuable source of data and information, and in this vein the Trust supports well managed tag and release programmes. Good data is essential for effective species conservation and management, and the SSACN database should represent a positive addition to existing data sources.*"

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The Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network (SSACN) is a Charity registered in Scotland.

SSACN was established to lead a unified, coordinated and comprehensive approach to international, national and local conservation issues which may affect recreational sea angling in Scotland.

The 2007 Marine Environment Inquiry report by the Environment and Rural Development Committee of the Scottish Government recognised that conservation in the marine environment has historically been very low on the agenda for politicians in Scotland.

SSACN campaigns and works with statutory bodies for the continual improvement of Scottish RSA fisheries and access for all anglers to them so that sea anglers can effectively enjoy their sport within fisheries managed for the benefit of all and not just a select few commercial interests.

Issue ::

Although many anglers have a deep understanding of sharks and their movements and have long recognised that there are issues with the stocks of many species, governments will only accept scientific data before they will consider implementing shark conservation policies.

Tagging is the only non-destructive assessment of sharks available which will help provide data such as :

- Species migrations
- Growth rates
- Population and stock make-up
- Stock fluctuations dynamics

As no scientific body can afford to pay scientists/marine biologists to effectively tag and release large numbers of fish, the SSTP has been formed to encourage anglers to get involved out of their love for the fish.

Sea Angling in Scotland ::

Recreational sea angling is a selective, environmentally friendly and low-impact fishing activity, it is the # 1 coastal recreation activity in Scotland and is of great social and economic importance.

Scotland should be a major sea angling centre based around species that are not readily available elsewhere in the British Isles, but lack of stocks through inefficient and ineffective fisheries management has left many species virtually extinct and many areas barren and fishless.

Sea angling supports many livelihoods and business opportunities and contributes more than £150 million / yr to the Scottish economy; over £20 million / yr is being lost to the Scottish economy through the lack of fish stocks and facilities.

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The Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network

www.ssacn.org - Fish for the future.

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