

## Shark Awareness Day: High risk of extinction for sharks and rays In the Mediterranean, despite protection measures

**Rome, 14 July 2021** -- Forty percent of Mediterranean shark and ray species are threatened with extinction. Over the past half century, 13 species have become extinct locally, mainly in the western Mediterranean and the Adriatic Sea due to overfishing in the Mediterranean, one of the most exploited seas in the world, and the loss of habitat. To date, the catch and sale of 24 species of sharks and rays in the Mediterranean is banned, while for another 9 species the registration of catches and discards is required. Despite the obligation for the Mediterranean states to report any accidental catch to the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the transmission of data remains largely inadequate.

In order to assess the effectiveness of these measures, in 2018 and 2020 MedReAct conducted a [survey](#) in the Italian ports of the Adriatic, Tyrrhenian and Ionian Seas that uncovered cases of landing and sale of protected sharks and rays. The survey also revealed a general lack of awareness of the protection measures by fish market operators and fishermen. This contributed to the landing and sale of strictly protected species such as porbeagle, basking shark, angular rough shark, common skate, devil ray, white skate and mako shark. Furthermore, a comparison of the catch data reported by Italy to the GFCM with those that emerged from the MedReAct survey shows that many catches go unreported.

For these reasons, MedReAct calls for the full implementation of the protection measures, supported by awareness-raising initiatives for fishermen and fish market operators, and greater accuracy in data transmission to the EU and the GFCM.

“These are urgent measures that should be implemented immediately” said Vittoria Gnetti of MedReAct. “Delaying the full implementation of the protection measures for sharks and rays will accelerate the extinction of these species in the Mediterranean. The damage caused not only to these species but also to the overall marine biodiversity of the Mediterranean, already severely affected by decades of overfishing, would be irreversible.”

[Here's an infographic that looks at the conservation status of sharks and rays in the Mediterranean Sea.](#)