

Dutch Government Announces New International Shark Strategy

The Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) has recently published a strategy to manage and protect sharks and rays within waters of the Netherlands, Caribbean Netherlands and international waters. This new strategy officially makes fishing for or possessing shark parts punishable by law in Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba.

On May 1st, Minister Carola Schouten, from the Ministry of LNV announced a new International Shark Strategy. This new plan will offer unprecedented protection of sharks and rays through the use of international treaties, research and public awareness. This strategy now officially forbids owning or fishing for sharks and places new pressure on fishermen to implement new techniques and updated fishing gear to avoid accidentally catching sharks and rays as bycatch.

This is exciting news for the Yarari reserve for sharks and marine mammals, a marine sanctuary around the islands of Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius. Since its establishment in 2015, with St. Eustatius joining in 2018, fishing for sharks and rays within the reserve has been prohibited. With the addition of this new strategy, legislation will be added to officially make this punishable by law. This also includes possessing shark parts, specifically shark fins. Tadzio Bervoets, DCNA's



Save Our Sharks (SOS) project leader states that *"This is really good news for the endangered sharks around the BES-islands. We hope that also the three other, neighboring, Dutch Caribbean islands, Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten, will eventually be included in the Yarari Sanctuary to effectively protect these transboundary species."*

Sharks are especially vulnerable to overfishing and habitat degradation as they are late to mature and produce few young. Long migration routes also place them in danger if international waters are not managed and protected. The future of these critical species will not be possible without more substantial commitments to their protection such as this new International Shark Strategy.

Important conservation strategies such as this, paired with initiatives such as DCNA's SOS project (2015-2018) are crucial to ensuring a sustainable future for our oceans. An increase in research and public awareness will play key roles in the overall management and conservation efforts going forward.

Download the Internal Shark Strategy here:

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2019/05/01/internationale-haaien-strategie-2019-ihs-19>

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