

# Great news for shark and ray conservation in the Caribbean!

*The first cross-border protective management in a Wider Caribbean context for elasmobranch species*

**In March 2017 it was officially decided to protect eight shark species under the international Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Protocol following a proposal by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs in cooperation with a team of shark experts. The SPAW protocol is the only cross-border legislative instrument for nature conservation in the Wider Caribbean Region.**

Through the SPAW protocol, which is a United Nations initiative, the signatory countries set agreements to protect vulnerable animals and their unique habitats. The agreements concern trade and fisheries, as well as tourism and coastal development. Until now, no sharks or rays were included in the protocol, despite being an especially threatened animal group, both on a global scale and in the Caribbean region. The main threats to shark populations are overfishing and destruction of vital habitats such as coral reefs and mangroves.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs proposed a shortlist of eight shark species for listing on the protocol. This included three species of hammerhead shark, the whale shark, the oceanic whitetip shark, the smalltooth sawfish, and two manta ray species. In November 2016, the proposals of all eight species were accepted during a technical meeting in Miami.

For the proposals, the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs was working closely with the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance and with scientific and policy support from the Dutch Elasmobranch Association (NEV).

These fact sheets with information about the proposed action were produced by the NEV to support the final decision making process.

Irene Kingma, director of the Dutch Elasmobranch Society (NEV) and one of the shark experts that helped with the shortlist: *"Sharks do not respect borders and cover enormous distances, which is why it is important to protect them on a region-wide scale. The proposals from the Dutch Ministry have helped providing these fragile species with the protection they deserve, which we consider a great success."*

The Annex II contains the list of species that are agreed to receive the highest level of protection in the wider Caribbean region. Any form of destruction, disturbance, possession and trade is prohibited and their habitats are strictly regulated.

The species listed in the Annex III are the ones that should receive special attention and sustainable management to ensure and maintain healthy populations. All protected species listed under the SPAW Protocol can be found on the CAR SPAW RAC website. ([http://www.car-spaw-rac.org/IMG/pdf/annexes\\_of\\_spaw\\_protocol\\_revised\\_22-02-2017.pdf](http://www.car-spaw-rac.org/IMG/pdf/annexes_of_spaw_protocol_revised_22-02-2017.pdf))

## The 8 new SPAW Protocol listed shark and ray species

<b>ANNEX III</b>	Hammerhead sharks ( <i>Sphyrna lewini</i> , <i>Sphyrna mokarran</i> , <i>Sphyrna zygaena</i> )
	Manta rays ( <i>Manta birostris</i> , <i>Manta alfredi</i> , <i>Manta sp. cf. birostris</i> )
	Oceanic whitetip shark ( <i>Carcharhinus longimanus</i> )
	Whale shark ( <i>Rhincodon typus</i> )
<b>ANNEX II</b>	Smalltooth sawfish ( <i>Pristis pectinata</i> )



Photo by: © Peter Verhoog

*"We are delighted that our proposal got such broad support from the present countries," says Guus Schutjes of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs. "The Netherlands has strived for the structural protection of nature and biodiversity in the Caribbean for some time now and cross-border protection is an essential part of this."*

Tadzio Bervoets, chair of the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance and leader of the Save Our Sharks project: *"The Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance and its partners have been working hard in the Dutch Caribbean region and in the Caribbean in general to increase protection for sharks. Through the funding provided to us by the National Postcode Lottery we have been doing scientific research, education and outreach and in this case significant lobbying work, and we are encouraged by this excellent development coming out of French Guiana. Sharks are critical to the Caribbean region and their conservation is essential to the health of our Caribbean Sea. With this historic vote, shark conservation efforts have been significantly increased in the region and we are elated to have been a part of the process. We hope that more species will soon be added to the annexes of the SPAW Protocol giving them the conservation status that they need in the Caribbean Sea."*



Photo by: © Jim Abernethy

**Text from Save Our Sharks website:**

<http://www.saveoursharks.nl>

**Learn more about the eight species:**

<http://saveoursharks.nl/en/spaw-proposals-fact-sheets/>

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