

Illegally caught shark auctioned in Scheveningen

Critically Endangered porbeagle shark on Dutch restaurant menu

25.08.11: Despite EU rules to protect it, a rare porbeagle shark was auctioned last week at Scheveningen, in the Netherlands. The nearly three meter long shark was caught in the Southern North Sea and sold to a fishmonger from Katwijk who put the animal on the menu.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) classifies the Northeast Atlantic porbeagle population as Critically Endangered. In 2010, based on scientific advice, the EU set Atlantic porbeagle fishing quotas at zero and proposed international porbeagle protections under fisheries and wildlife treaties, prompting global attention for the imperiled species.

"We are shocked that Dutch fishermen and officials could be so unaware of regulations aimed at protecting one of Europe's most endangered sharks," said Irene Kingma, Shark Alliance coordinator for the Netherlands. "National enforcement is essential to effective conservation of migratory EU species. This disturbing news shows that the Netherlands has a long way to go in ensuring that fishermen understand, respect, and are held accountable to the rules."

Porbeagle meat is exceptionally prized, particularly in European countries. Porbeagle fins are also sent to Asia for use in shark fin soup. The Netherlands is one of the only North Atlantic European countries to not report any porbeagle landings (since 1970). Norway and Denmark had substantial porbeagle fisheries last century that ended in collapse.

"Tragically, the auctioned shark was an adult female," said Paddy Walker, chairperson of the Dutch Elasmobranch Association. "Female porbeagles do not reach sexual maturity until their teen years and then produce just four pups on average at a time, making this species extremely vulnerable to overfishing. The endangered state of porbeagle in the North Sea means that each adult female is important for conservation."

Earlier this month, the Shark Alliance launched a petition calling on all EU fisheries ministers to fulfill the commitments of the EU Community Plan of Action for Sharks, which, among other things, encourages EU Member States to provide protection for endangered shark species.

To sign the petition, go to sharkalliancepetition.org

“Sharks, as top predators, play an essential role for the health of our oceans. We call on European citizens to make their voices heard by signing the petition and calling for much needed protection of sharks from overexploitation” said Irene Kingma.

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Credit: Alles over Katwijk".