

# MEDITERRANEAN SHARKS FACE RISK OF 'DISAPPEARING'

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Biodiversity, Ecology, and Wildlife Related Issues

The IUCN Red List counts 79 endangered shark and 120 endangered ray species. | Photo Credit: [Getty Images/iStockphoto](#)

Sharks — the sea's top predators for millions of years — are at risk of disappearing from the Mediterranean as overfishing and plastic pollution choke populations of the endangered hunters, conservationists have warned.

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) said that more than half of shark and ray species in the Mediterranean were under threat, and that almost a third of them have been fished to the brink of extinction.

Its report, released ahead of Shark Awareness Day, singled out Libya and Tunisia as the worst culprits, with each country's fishery hauling in about 4,200 tonnes of sharks a year — three times that of the next biggest Mediterranean fisher, Italy.

While some species are targeted for food, many of the sharks fished in the Mediterranean are bycatch caught up in nets set for other fish.

The WWF said it had recorded more than 60 shark species entangled in fishing nets across the Mediterranean. In addition, the explosion of plastic pollution is endangering shark populations, either through the animals ingesting or becoming enmeshed in refuse items.

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