

Scottish sharks to be tracked for a second year

March 14 2013



Basking shark feeding. Credit: SNH - Paul Naylor.

Scientists are to extend a popular basking shark tracking project for another year, it was announced today. For the last seven months the public have been able to follow the progress of eight of the giant sharks online, after they were tagged off the west coast of Scotland in July last year. Two of the sharks have travelled much further than expected, with one reaching the west coast of Portugal and the other the Canary Islands, just off Africa, a distance of more than 3000 km.

The project was started by the University of Exeter and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to find out more about the life cycle of basking sharks that gather in [large numbers](#) around the islands of Coll, Tiree and Canna every summer.

Another 29 sharks will be tagged in the summer of 2013 using a range of

tracking devices, to gather more information on how the sharks use the area and where they go in winter. The work is part of a wider programme of marine research led by SNH and Marine Scotland, to help Government and others plan for the [sustainable management](#) of the sea. Results from the tagging project will help the Scottish Government decide whether a Marine Protected Area should be put in place to safeguard the sharks and balance environmental interests with industry and recreation.

Dr Matthew Witt from the Environment and Sustainability Institute at the University of Exeter said: "Sharks play an important role in maintaining healthy marine ecosystems hence their conservation is important. In addition to the eight sharks tagged with real-time [satellite transmitters](#) last year, a further 12 sharks were tagged with technology that stores data on the tag for transmission at a later date. We're looking forward to analysing the data from these over the next few months, once all the tags have detached from their sharks."

Dr Suzanne Henderson from SNH, who is managing the project said: "We're getting some fascinating insights into the behaviour of the sharks from the tagging work carried out last year - it was a surprise to see one swim as far south as Africa. Another year of tagging will build on the work we've already done, increasing our confidence in the results and giving us more information on which to base decisions."

Provided by University of Exeter

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