

New shark species could be swimming toward UK as seas warm

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University research suggests 10 new species of shark could inhabit British waters by 2050. Credit: University of Southampton

University of Southampton research suggests new types of sharks could be heading to UK waters as a result of warming seas.

Dr. Ken Collins, Senior Research Fellow from the University of Southampton, based at the National Oceanography Centre Southampton, has forecast 10 species of sharks currently found in warmer parts of the world, such as hammerheads and blacktip sharks, may be swimming in British seas within 30 years as the climate changes.

And a new 'shark map' reveals the places where the fish are already found in UK waters.

It names Cornwall as the country's shark capital with at least 20 species found off the coast, followed by the Scilly Isles and Devon.

An estimated 10 million small and 100,000 larger sharks from 40 different species are found in the seas around the UK.

More species could be heading towards the UK from places such as the Mediterranean and the coast of Africa as seas become warmer due to climate change, according to the research commissioned to mark Nat Geo WILD's week-long "Sharkfest" of TV programming this week.

But those already found in UK waters, such as thresher, basking and nursehound sharks, are in decline due to over-fishing and other problems.

They need protection, according to Dr. Collins, who was previously an administrator of the UK shark tagging programme.

Dr. Collins said: "It's likely we will be seeing more sharks spread from warmer regions such as the Mediterranean Sea towards our waters in the UK over the next 30 years.

"These include the likes of blacktips, sand tigers and hammerheads, which are currently found swimming off the coasts of Spain and Portugal."

He added: "Though while the potential number of shark species around the UK may increase in the next few decades, the overall number of sharks, especially the larger ones, will fall as a result of over-fishing, plastic waste and [climate change](#)."

"It's really important we work together to prevent a premature extinction of these wonderful creatures."

He also said he saw "no reason" why there should not be great white sharks in UK waters, as they were found in colder waters off South Africa and favoured seals—found in Cornwall—to eat.

But numbers of great whites, hit by an image problem since the movie *Jaws*, are in decline worldwide so the chances of seeing them in the UK falls each year, he said.

Polling of 2,000 British adults for Nat Geo WILD found four in 10 people admitted to an irrational fear of sharks while swimming in the sea, while more than eight out of 10 think they have been given a bad reputation by Hollywood.

A spokesman for Nat Geo WILD said sharks had been portrayed for too long in a one-dimensional way, as terrifying predators, and Sharkfest aimed to reveal the "true awe-inspiring nature of [sharks](#)".

The 10 new [species](#) of shark that could inhabit British waters by 2050 are:

1. Great hammerhead
2. Blacktip shark
3. Sand tiger or spotted raggedtooth shark
4. Bigeye thresher
5. Longfin mako
6. Bronze whaler or copper shark
7. Oceanic whitetip shark
8. Silky shark
9. Dusky shark
10. Goblin shark

Provided by University of Southampton

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