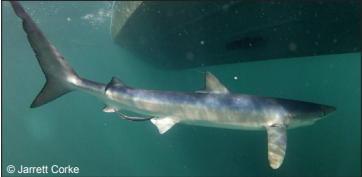


# SPECIES IDENTIFICATION

Among the 30 different species of shark that occur in Atlantic Canadian waters, only four are commonly caught by recreational fishermen.



## Blue Shark

**Max Size and Weight:**  
3.8 m / 13 ft; 450 lb / 200 kg  
**Key Features:**

- Slender body
- Long pectoral fins
- Top of body is deep indigo blue turning to white underneath



## Common Thresher Shark

**Max Size and Weight:**  
6 m / 19 ft; 510 lb / 230 kg  
**Key Features:**

- Extremely large upper caudal lobe
- Brown, gray, blue/grey or black in colour; white underneath comes up over top of pectoral fin



## Porbeagle Shark

**Max Size and Weight:**  
3.7 m / 12 ft; 300 lb / 136 kg  
**Key Features:**

- Prominent primary caudal keel and a smaller secondary keel
- White patch on trailing edge of first dorsal
- Heavy blue/grey and white



## Shortfin Mako Shark

**Max Size and Weight:**  
3.9 m / 13 ft; 1,425 lbs / 570 kg  
**Key Features:**

- Prominent primary keel, but no secondary keel
- Long, curved, pointed teeth that stick out of the mouth
- Metallic/indigo blue and white

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Cover Photo: © Southwest Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries Service



Louisbourg Shark Derby	Blue Shark Fishing Charters	Tuna Fever Fishing Charters
Ocean Tracking Network	Dalhousie University	University of New Brunswick
Petit de Grat Shark Derby	Fisheries and Oceans Canada	Yarmouth Shark Scramble
Sharks Unlimited	Giant Bluefin Tuna Charters	WWF-Canada
St. Andrews Sport Fishing	Lunenburg Ocean Adventures	

Sharks play an important role in regulating the ecological structure and function of the oceans. However many shark populations continue to decline due to intense fishing pressure, habitat degradation and climate change.  
In order to maintain healthy shark populations, it is imperative that sharks are caught, handled and released properly so as to minimize harm and post-release mortality. Promoting best practices of catch and release shark fishing, like those provided here, helps maximize the post-release survival of sharks. Representatives of various shark and other recreational fishing operations participated in a WWF-Canada workshop on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015 to develop a Code of Conduct outlining guidelines which, if followed, would minimize harm to caught and released sharks. Participants included:

## CODE OF CONDUCT for Recreational Shark Fishing in Atlantic Canada



## SHARK FISHING

### Best catch, handle and release practices

## BE PREPARED

If you catch a shark, there are several useful tools that will help ensure you are using the best catch, handle and release practices possible:

- Data sheet for recording all catch
- Gloves (shark skin is rough; ensures safe handling of shark)
- Measuring tape
- Towel (used to calm sharks down)
- Dehooking devices (e.g. pig tail dehooker, bolt or plier cutters)
- Spare gear (e.g. monofilament, hooks, tools)
- Shark harness (if used)
- Salt water pump (if planning on taking sharks out of the water)
- Tagging gear (if practicing)



### Line

We recommend a minimum of 80 lbs test monofilament or braided line and 300 lbs test swivel and a fighting harness. Experienced anglers can use the IGFA standards for world record game fishes.

### Hooks

Non-stainless steel J hooks (10/0 or 12/0) are recommended, but circle hooks can be used and may help increase the likelihood of mouth hooking. Barbless hooks are not recommended for inexperienced anglers.

The hook should be removed as long as it is safe for both humans and sharks. If the hook cannot be safely removed, it should be left in the fish with no remaining line attached.

### Floats

Balloons should not be used in tracking fish movements. Balloons can mimic jellyfish and be eaten by other marine species (e.g. sea turtles). Floats (i.e. net floats and/or homemade floats) are a good and inexpensive alternative.



# BEST CATCH, HANDLE AND RELEASE PRACTICES FOR SHARK FISHING

*Rod and reel is the only gear type permitted for recreational fishing for sharks in Atlantic Canadian waters.*

## FISHING TECHNIQUE

In order to reduce injury and exhaustion to yourself and the shark, use the following steps:

- a.** Plan your release strategy before the hook is set and make sure tools are easily accessible.
- b.** Observe the float at all times, so that the hook can be quickly set.
- c.** Regardless of the hook type being used, set the hook as quickly as possible so that the shark gets caught in the corner of the mouth and not in the gut.
- d.** Once a shark is hooked, all other lines should be reeled in immediately in order to focus on fighting one fish at a time.
- e.** Limit fight time as much as possible.
- f.** Maneuver the boat to follow a hooked shark and gain line whenever possible. Avoid fighting the shark from a dead drift, as this can cause injuries to people and sharks.



## AT-VESSEL HANDLE AND RELEASE

It is recommended that, wherever possible, captured sharks be kept in the water. In order to enhance post-release survival, use the following steps:

- a.** Bring the shark as close as possible to the boat. Wear gloves and minimize physical handling of the shark. Do not use a gaff to bring the shark closer, as this will severely injure it.



- b.** Do not hold the shark by its gills. This may cause serious injury or lead to death.
- c.** Remove the hook with a dehooking tool. If the shark has swallowed the hook or been foul hooked and the hook cannot be safely removed, cut the leader as close to the hook as possible.



- d.** If the shark is exhausted, due to extended fight time, reviving the shark is necessary to ensure it survives. Depending on the size of your vessel, there are a few options for reviving sharks. Begin by orienting the shark parallel with the boat (head facing the bow):
  - i.** While the hook remains in the shark’s mouth, hold the leader in hand (or securely attach it to the vessel) and put the boat in idle.
  - ii.** Place a cable around its body (i.e. behind its pectoral fins). Hold both ends of the cable in hands and put the boat into idle. Take care to avoid the gills when securing and removing the cable.

Swim the shark alongside the vessel for a minimum of 10-15 minutes, until the mouth begins pumping and/or the tail is moving well on its own. Be sure to remove the hook and any gear prior to releasing the shark.

*An in-water harness can be used to support sharks next to vessel and ensure handling is minimized.*

## ONBOARD HANDLE AND RELEASE

Sharks are fragile animals when taken out of the water. Extreme care must be taken when handling them. If you intend on bringing a shark onboard the vessel, use the following steps to enhance post-release survival:

- a.** Once the shark is next to the boat, lift the shark out of the water horizontally, so as to not tear any ligaments, tendons or damage internal organs. Do not lift the shark out of the water by its head, gills, dorsal fin or tail.
  - i.** Small sharks are best handled using both hands; one holding the dorsal fin, pectoral fin or neck (i.e. between the gills and dorsal fin) and the other holding the tail or supporting the body.
  - ii.** Medium to large sharks should be handled by two persons. One person holds the head, dorsal fin and/or pectoral fin while the other person holds the tail and supports the body. The belly and teeth should always face away from the handlers.



- iii.** If available, the use of a harness to raise the shark out of the water is recommended.
- b.** Remove the hook with a dehooking tool. If the shark has swallowed the hook or been foul hooked and the hook cannot be safely removed, cut the leader as close to the hook as possible.
- c.** Lay the shark on its side in a shady, wet area. Do not squeeze, kick, kneel, hold or wrestle the shark.



- d.** To calm down a stressed shark, cover its eyes with a piece of smooth, wet cloth. Never press against the eyes.
- e.** Limit air exposure (i.e. initial removal until release) to three minutes or less; any longer and the gills may become damaged.
- f.** If exposure may be longer than three minutes, sharks should be ventilated by putting a hose in the shark’s mouth to pass fresh ocean water over its gills. Ensure the hose is set at low pressure and is running before putting it in the shark’s mouth.



- g.** Before returning the shark to the water, test the shark’s eye reflex - an indicator of stress. Tap next to the eye. If the eyelid closes quickly then the shark is in good condition. If the eyelid is sluggish or not responsive, then the shark should be revived. Follow steps in “At-Vessel Handle and Release” step d for how to revive a shark.
- h.** When returning the shark to the water, be sure that the shark is returned to the water head first and follow the instructions for handling sharks above.

*If a shark is injured and/or foul hooked, it should not be brought onboard, but revived and released immediately.*

