

SPECIES INFORMATION SHEET

Alopias vulpinus

English name: Thresher shark	Scientific name: <i>Alopias vulpinus</i>	
Taxonomical group: Class: Elasmobranchii Order: Lamniformes Family: Alopiidae	Species authority: Bonnaterre, 1788	
Subspecies, Variations, Synonyms: –	Generation length: 8–14 years	
Past and current threats (Habitats Directive article 17 codes): Fishery, Bycatch (F02)	Future threats (Habitats Directive article 17 codes): Fishery, Bycatch (F02)	
IUCN Criteria: –	HELCOM Red List Category:	NA Not Applicable
Global / European IUCN Red List Category: VU (NT in the North East Atlantic)/NE	Habitats Directive: –	
Previous HELCOM Red List Category (2007): CR		
Protection and Red List status in HELCOM countries: Denmark –/–, Estonia –/–, Finland –/–, Germany –/–, Latvia –/–, Lithuania –/–, Poland –/–, Russia –/–, Sweden –/NA		

Distribution and status in the Baltic Sea region

This oceanic and coastal shark is virtually circumglobal in tropical to cold-temperate seas. In the North East Atlantic it ranges from Norway, south (including the Mediterranean and Black Seas) down the coast of western Africa. It is however only a rare visitor in the HELCOM area. All members of genus *Alopias*, the thresher sharks, are listed as Vulnerable globally because of their declining populations. These downward trends are the result of a combination of slow life history characteristics, and high levels of largely unmanaged and unreported mortality in target and bycatch fisheries. In the North East Atlantic data is limited but a population decline suspected and the species is listed as Near Threatened in this area.

Habitat and ecology

While found both in coastal and oceanic waters, it is most abundant in offshore waters. It ranges between surface waters and more than 300 m depth. Thresher shark is viviparous, with a gestation period of nine months. Young individuals generally remain close to shore after parturition and during their first few years.

Maximum recorded size varies with sex and geographic location and ranges from 4 to almost 6 m. Size at maturity is between 260–465 cm total length and estimated age at maturity ranges from 3–9 years. The species reaches an age of at least 24 years maybe up to 50 years.

Diet varies but is often dominated by small, pelagic fish like, anchovies, herring and mackaerel.

Description of major threats

The thresher shark is taken as primarily as bycatch of longline fisheries for tuna and swordfish in the Northeast Atlantic, and also in driftnets and gillnets. Within the HELCOM area, however, no major threats are identified.

Assessment justification

No regular occurrence of mature individuals within the HELCOM area, hence categorized Not Applicable (NA) for the assessment.

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Recommendations for actions to conserve the species

This species is a rare visitor to the HELCOM area but since it is threatened in adjacent areas fishing of the species should be prohibited.

Common names

D -Fuchshai; ES –; GB –Thresher shark; DK -Rævehaj; FIN –Kettuhai ; LV -Parastā lapshaizivs ; LT - Paprastoji jūry lapė; PL -Kosogon; RU -; S – Rävhaj

References

- Goldman, K.J., Baum, J., Cailliet, G.M., Cortés, E., Kohin, S., Macías, D., Megalofonou, P., Perez, M., Soldo, A., Trejo, T. (2009). *Alopias vulpinus*. In: IUCN 2012. IUCN Red List of Threatened Species Available at: www.iucnredlist.org (viewed 27 January 2013)
- HELCOM (2007). HELCOM Red list of threatened and declining species of lampreys and fish of the Baltic Sea. Baltic Sea Environmental Proceedings No. 109. Helsinki Commission, Helsinki. 40 pp.
- HELCOM (2012). Checklist of Baltic Sea Macro-species. Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings No. 130. Helsinki Commission, Helsinki. 203 pp.