

SPECIES INFORMATION SHEET

Galeorhinus galeus

English name: Tope shark	Scientific name: <i>Galeorhinus galeus</i>	
Taxonomical group: Class: Elasmobranchii Order: Carcharhiniformes Family: Triakidae	Species authority: Linnaeus, 1758	
Subspecies, Variations, Synonyms: –	Generation length: 21.3 years	
Past and current threats (Habitats Directive article 17 codes): By-catch (F02), Fishing (F02)	Future threats (Habitats Directive article 17 codes): By-catch (F02), Fishing (F02)	
IUCN Criteria: A2bd, D1	HELCOM Red List Category:	VU Vulnerable
Global / European IUCN Red List Category: VU/NE	Habitats Directive: –	
Previous HELCOM Red List Category (2007): EN		
Protection and Red List status in HELCOM countries: Denmark –/–, Estonia –/–, Finland –/–, Germany –/– (Baltic Sea), Latvia –/–, Lithuania –/–, Poland –/–, Russia –/–, Sweden –/– VU		

Distribution and status in the Baltic Sea region

Tope shark is a migrant species that occurred regularly in the Kattegat in the 19th century. The species occurs regularly in the North Sea and Skagerrak but are nowadays a rare visitor in Kattegat, and only occasionally recorded from the Sound. Tope sharks probably still occur regularly in low numbers in packs of spiny dogfish in the HELCOM area. Tope shark is not the subject of targeted fisheries in the northeast Atlantic but is often caught in mixed demersal and pelagic fisheries. The population is considered to have decreased by 30 (10–50)% over the last three generations (63.9 years). The number of mature individuals regularly occurring in the HELCOM area is very small.



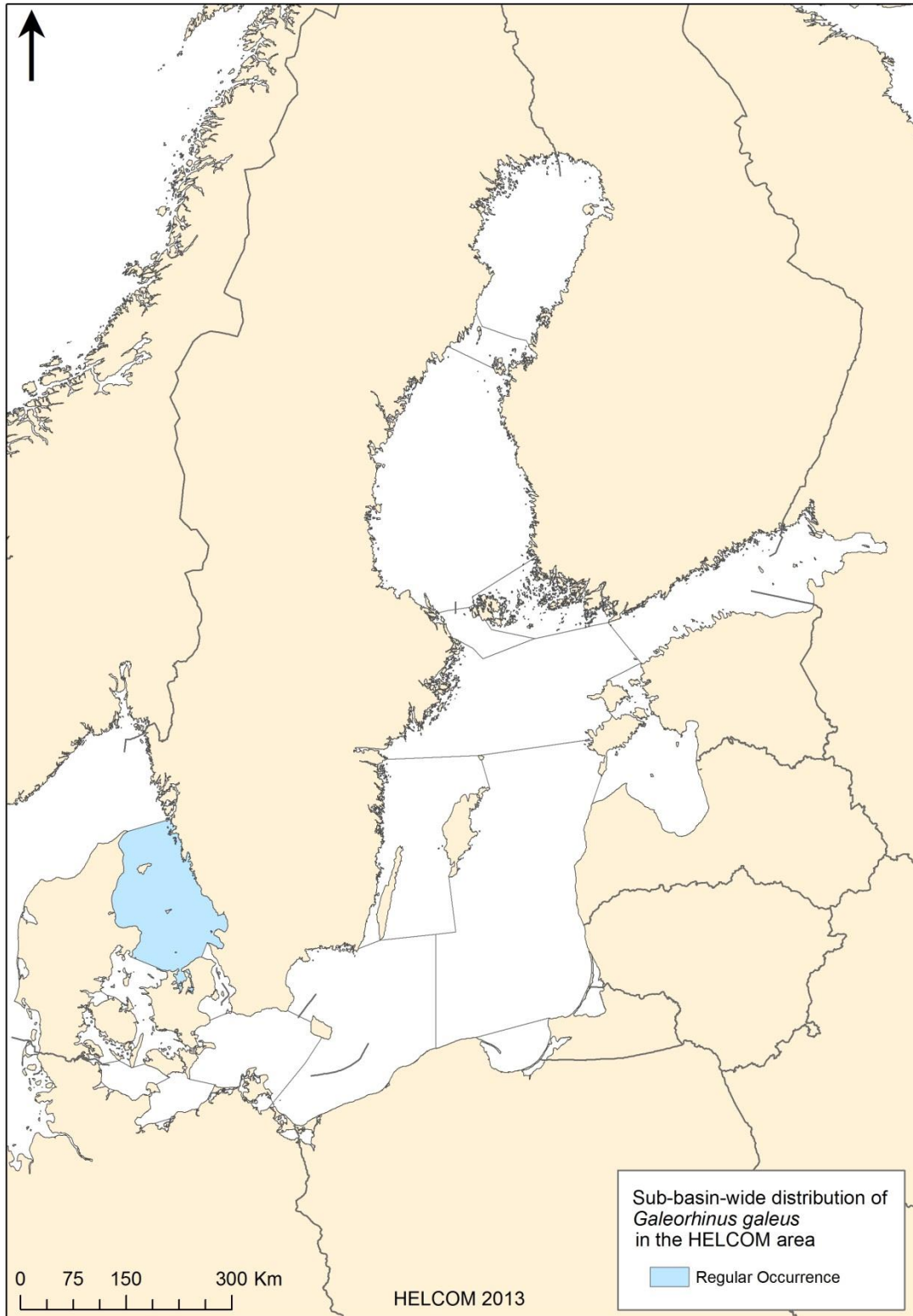
Tope shark. Photo by Anders Salesjö Photography, Undervattenbilder.se.

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Distribution map

The map shows the sub-basin in the HELCOM area where the species is currently known to occur as a rare visitor (HELCOM 2012). Tope shark occurred regularly in the Kattegat area in the 19th century.



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Habitat and ecology

The species is most abundant in cold to warm temperate continental seas, from the surfline and very shallow water to well offshore (Walker 2006). The species is primarily found near the bottom but ranges through the water column even into the pelagic zone. The tope shark feeds mainly on teleost fish, most often on bottom-associated species although pelagic fish are also taken. Cephalopods, mostly squid and octopus, are also important in their diet. The diet of small juveniles includes a high proportion of crustaceans and other prey such as annelids and gastropods.

Description of major threats

Tope shark is of limited importance in commercial fisheries. Catches are sparse and the species is mainly caught as by-catch in pelagic and trawl fisheries on schooling fish species like herrings and mackerel.

Assessment justification

The area of occupancy is above the level for being considered threatened (> 4 000 km²) but the extent of occurrence is estimated to 25 000 km² which is below the threshold for Near Threatened in the B criterion. The population is currently declining or is expected to do so in the future. The rate of decline has amounted to 30 (10–50)% over the last 60 years. The rate of decline exceeds the threshold for Vulnerable (VU) in the A criterion. The number of mature individuals is estimated to be c. 525 (50–1000) which is lower than the threshold for Vulnerable (VU) according to the D-criterion hence this species is categorised as VU (A2bd, D1). Immigration into the HELCOM area is not deemed to be significant to downgrade the threat category since the species is declining also in adjacent areas.

Recommendations for actions to conserve the species

Bycatch in mixed demersal and pelagic fisheries should be reduced. Additionally, advice on a suitable TAC is needed from ICES.

Common names

DE: Hundshaj; DK: Gråhaj; ES: ; FI: Harmaakoirahai ; GB: Tope shark; LA: Zāgastes haizivs; LI: Paprastasis sriubinis ryklis; PL: Żarłacz szary; RU: Суповая акула; SE: Gråhaj

References

- 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.
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