

# Porbeagle shark

*Lamna nasus*

PROPOSAL

#44

<b>Proposed action</b>	Listing on CITES Appendix II
<b>Lead proponent</b>	European Union
<b>Co-sponsors</b>	Brazil, Comoros, Croatia, Egypt
<b>Annotation</b>	Entry into effect delayed by 18 months to allow Parties to resolve technical and administrative issues



ANDY MURCH

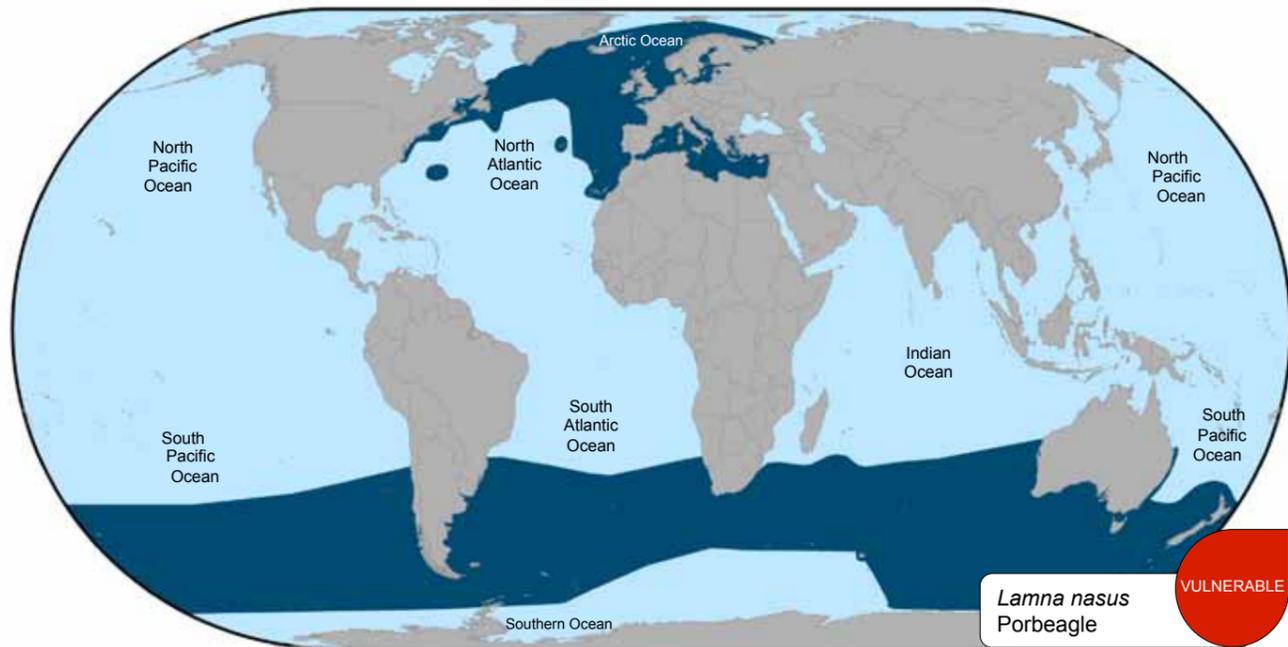
## Overview

The porbeagle is a globally threatened, low-productivity shark that has been seriously overfished in major parts of its range primarily for international trade in meat and fins. Strong demand for these products continues to drive targeted and incidental take of porbeagles that is inadequately managed or completely unregulated. CITES Appendix II listing is warranted to facilitate compliance with relevant fishing restrictions and establishment of science-based export limits, thereby complementing national and regional efforts toward recovery and sustainable use.



## Distribution

*Lamna nasus* is found in a circumglobal band of ~30–60°S in the Southern Hemisphere and mostly between 30–70°N in the North Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean.



Global distribution of the porbeagle shark. Source: IUCN

## Biological Characteristics

The porbeagle is a relatively large, highly migratory shark found on continental shelves and slopes both in coastal areas and far offshore. Porbeagles serve as top predators, feeding on fish, squid, and smaller sharks.

Porbeagle sharks are exceptionally vulnerable to overfishing due to:

- **Slow growth**
- **Late maturity (females mature at 13–18 years)**
- **Lengthy gestation (8–9 months)**
- **Few young (average of only four pups)**
- **Long life (up to ~65 years)**

Individuals of Southern Hemisphere porbeagle populations grow more slowly than those in the North Atlantic. Generation times for Northern and Southern populations span 18 and 26 years, respectively. These life history characteristics place porbeagle sharks in the lowest productivity category of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) guidelines for evaluating the status of commercially exploited aquatic species (rate of population increase of <0.14 and a generation time of >10 years).

## Fisheries

Porbeagle meat is among the most prized of all shark meat, particularly in Europe. The large fins of porbeagles are used in the traditional Asian celebratory dish, shark fin soup. As a result, schools of porbeagle sharks are targeted, primarily by longline fishermen, while individuals taken incidentally are often kept as a valuable secondary catch.

In 2009 and 2010, France, Spain, Canada, and New Zealand reported the highest recorded porbeagle landings. Many countries, however, do not report shark landings to the proper authorities, contributing to gross under-estimates of catches.

## International Trade

Shark import and export trade records are generally not species-specific, which hampers understanding of international trade. New species-specific codes established by the EU in 2010, however, have resulted in improved documentation of the EU market for porbeagle products.

It is clear that porbeagle meat is traded internationally, in both fresh and frozen form, to markets in the EU, Switzerland, Turkey, Morocco, China, the USA, and other

countries. With North Atlantic porbeagle fisheries greatly reduced, persistent EU demand for meat is being met by imports from countries without porbeagle catch limits, such as Japan and South Africa, and is likely putting greater pressure on Southern Hemisphere populations.

Most porbeagle fins are exported to Asia, particularly Indonesia and China. The porbeagle is one of six shark species frequently found in the global fin trade, including in the dominant Hong Kong market. Raw porbeagle fins are readily recognizable to species level by fin traders.

Rapid and inexpensive DNA tests are available for porbeagle parts and derivatives in trade. There are numerous shark species identification guides. Improvement of these tools is ongoing.

## Population Status

IUCN classifies the porbeagle shark as a threatened species with the following designations:

- **Vulnerable globally**
- **Critically Endangered in the Northeast Atlantic Ocean & Mediterranean Sea**
- **Endangered in the Northwest Atlantic Ocean**
- **Near Threatened in the Southern Ocean.**

The alarming statistics demonstrating severe porbeagle depletion include:

- **Declines to less than 5% of baseline levels reported for the Mediterranean**
- **90%+ declines in catch, biomass, and numbers estimated for Northeast Atlantic**
- **100-year recovery derived from Canadian population assessment**
- **82% decline in biomass since 1961 documented in Uruguay assessment**
- **86% decline in weight since late-1990s gleaned from New Zealand catch information.**

Globally, the extent and rate of decline of porbeagle populations significantly exceed the qualifying levels for inclusion in CITES Appendix II, while some particularly depleted populations already qualify for Appendix I status.

## Conservation Measures

The porbeagle shark is included in the following:

- **Annex I of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**
- **Appendix II of the Convention of Migratory Species (CMS)**
- **Annex II of the Barcelona Convention**
- **Appendix II of the Bern Convention.**

These designations signal international recognition of the exceptional vulnerability and need for cooperative

management of the species, but have not yet led to specific, binding fisheries regulations.

The EU established a total allowable catch (TAC) for Northeast Atlantic porbeagle in 2008 and cut it to zero for 2010. In 2011, the EU extended application of the zero porbeagle TAC to include EU waters of the Mediterranean. Porbeagles have specific, national legal protection in Sweden and Croatia. Porbeagle-specific fishing restrictions are in place in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Norway, and the USA. National porbeagle conservation measures are undermined by unregulated catches from adjacent countries' waters and the high seas. Indeed, around the world, there is scant evidence that domestic porbeagle fisheries management efforts are being effective.

Outside of the EU, there are no bilateral or regional quotas for porbeagle sharks. Proposals to prohibit porbeagle retention have been defeated at the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO). In 2007, ICCAT member countries agreed to reduce targeted porbeagle fishing; there has been little compliance or follow up action for this measure. Directed porbeagle fishing is banned and live release is encouraged for the North East Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NEAFC) Regulatory Area until 2014. The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) has designated the porbeagle shark as a "key shark species", but has not adopted any porbeagle fishing restrictions. In 2012, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) agreed to prohibit take of porbeagles and other sharks listed on Annex II of the Barcelona Convention, but implementation plans remain unclear.

In 2012, signatories to the CMS Memorandum of Understanding for Migratory Sharks adopted a Conservation Plan for the porbeagle (and six other CMS-listed shark species) that, *inter alia*, calls for "additional measures to ensure legal and sustainable international trade in sharks and shark products."

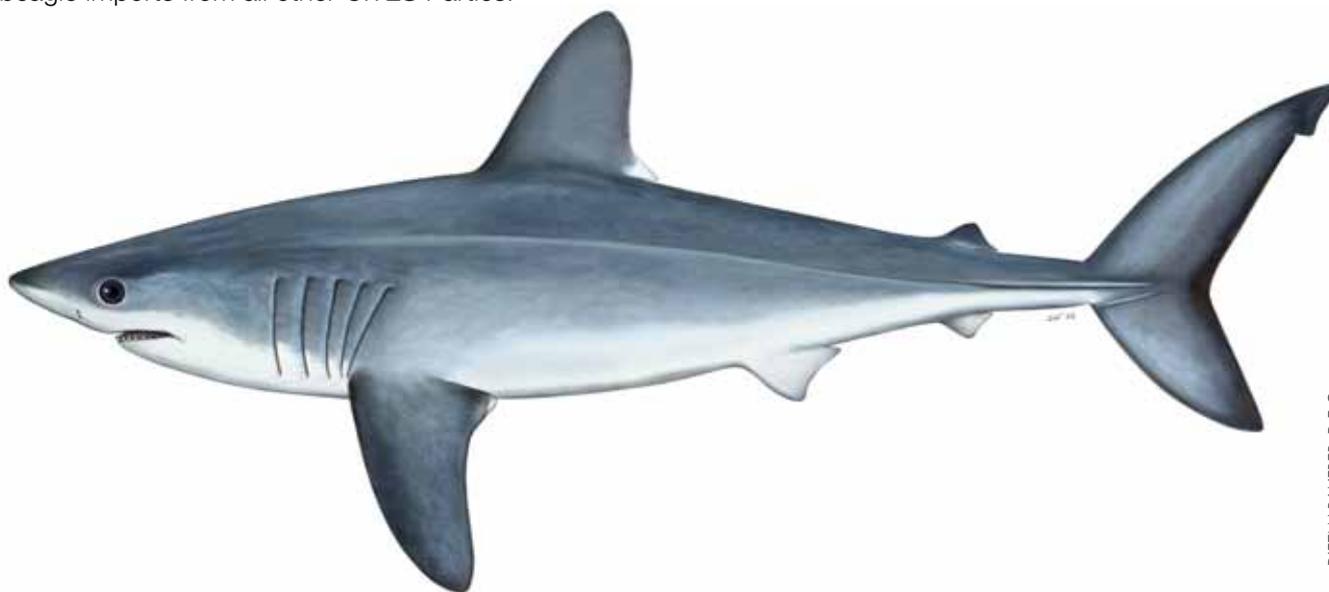


## CITES History

The EU proposed the porbeagle shark for listing in CITES Appendix II in 2007 and 2010, but in both instances failed to secure the two-thirds' majority required for adoption. At CoP15 in 2010, Committee I voted in favor of adoption. A margin of one vote prevented that decision from being endorsed in plenary. In 2012, the EU listed the porbeagle shark in CITES Appendix III, thereby requiring CITES export permits for all porbeagle products leaving the EU, and a certificate of origin for porbeagle imports from all other CITES Parties.

## Expert Advice

IUCN and TRAFFIC have concluded that the porbeagle shark meets the criteria for listing in CITES Appendix II, and TRAFFIC recommends that Parties support the proposal at CoP16. Most members of the ad hoc Expert Panel convened by FAO to review CITES proposals for marine species agreed that the species meets the decline criteria for inclusion in Appendix II. The CITES Secretariat recommends that this proposal be adopted.



DIETMAR WEBER, D.E.G.

## Call to action

Listing the porbeagle shark under CITES Appendix II is:

- Warranted under the listing criteria;
- Essential to ensuring that international trade is held to sustainable levels;
- Complementary to fisheries management and recovery efforts;
- Key to improving data on fisheries and trade; and
- Consistent with numerous international and regional policy commitments.

**Our coalition urges CITES Parties to vote in favor of Proposal #44 to list the porbeagle shark (*Lamna nasus*) on CITES Appendix II at CoP16.**

## References

Information in this fact sheet is based on that in the listing proposal, the associated IUCN/TRAFFIC analyses, the TRAFFIC Recommendations, the 2012 FAO Ad Hoc Expert Panel report, the CITES Secretariat's findings, and various RFMO resolutions and recommendations.

