

# Living Sharks of Maryland

HB 97 — Appendix A • Prepared by Andy Ellis • March 2026

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources manages 41 species of coastal sharks. At least 12 visit the Chesapeake Bay. According to the Department of Natural Resources, there are no recorded shark attacks in the Chesapeake Bay in the modern era. All images are from NOAA Fisheries (public domain) or the Florida Museum of Natural History.

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## Chesapeake Bay — Common Visitors

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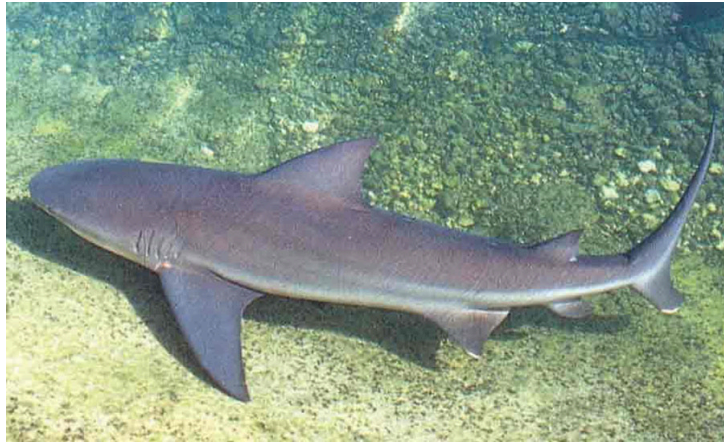
### 1. Sandbar Shark **Overfished — Rebuilding**

*Carcharhinus plumbeus*

Up to 8 ft • 100–200 lbs • Research-only (no harvest)

The most common shark in the Chesapeake Bay. The Bay serves as one of the most important sandbar shark nursery areas on the entire East Coast. Juveniles are abundant in summer and fall. Feeds on bottom fish, rays, and blue crabs.

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## 2. Bull Shark

*Carcharhinus leucas*

Up to 11.5 ft • Large Coastal Shark management group

Occasional summer visitor documented as far up the Bay as the Patuxent River. One of the few shark species that tolerates fresh water. Feeds on fish, rays, crustaceans, turtles, and other sharks.

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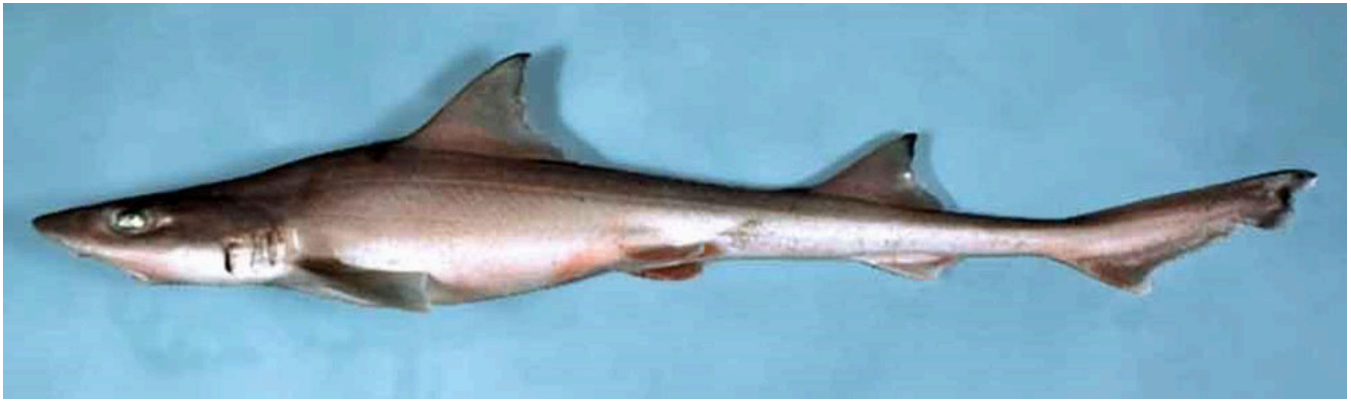
## 3. Sand Tiger Shark **Prohibited**

*Carcharias taurus*

Up to 10.5 ft • IUCN Vulnerable • Must be released if caught

Common in the lower Bay during summer and fall. Active at night. Despite rows of protruding teeth, it is generally docile. Feeds on small fish, squid, and other sharks.

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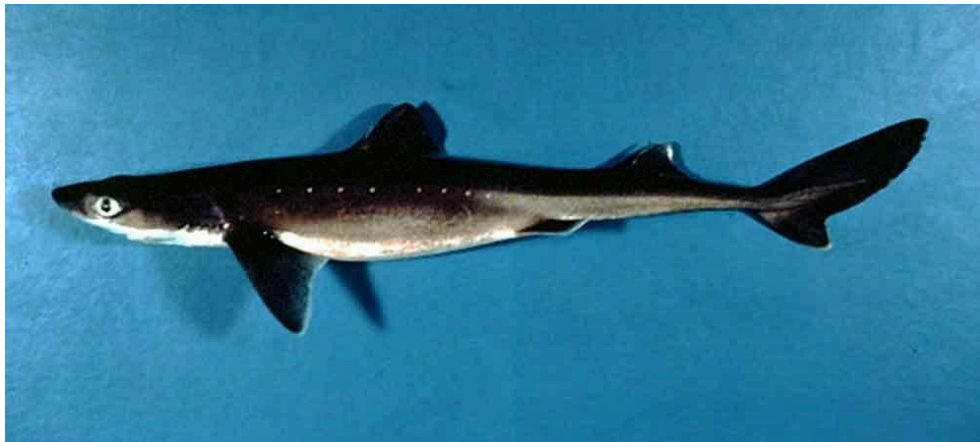


#### 4. Smooth Dogfish **Not Overfished**

*Mustelus canis*

Up to 5 ft • Smoothhound management group

Common to abundant in the lower Bay from summer through fall, ranging as far north as the Patuxent River. Travels in schools in waters less than 60 feet deep. Pavement-like teeth adapted for crushing shellfish. The most commercially caught shark in Maryland.



#### 5. Spiny Dogfish **Not Overfished**

*Squalus acanthias*

Up to 4.5 ft • Managed jointly by NOAA and ASMFC

Found in the lower Bay south of the Potomac River from late fall through early spring. Counter-seasonal to most other Bay sharks (present in cold months). Travels in schools. Named for the sharp spine in front of each dorsal fin.

### Chesapeake Bay — Occasional and Rare Visitors



## 6. Basking Shark **Prohibited • CITES II**

*Cetorhinus maximus*

Up to 40 ft • Second-largest living shark • Must be released if caught

Early spring visitor. A filter feeder that eats plankton, not fish. Often observed at the surface with its enormous mouth open. Gill slits nearly circle the head. One of the largest fish in the world.



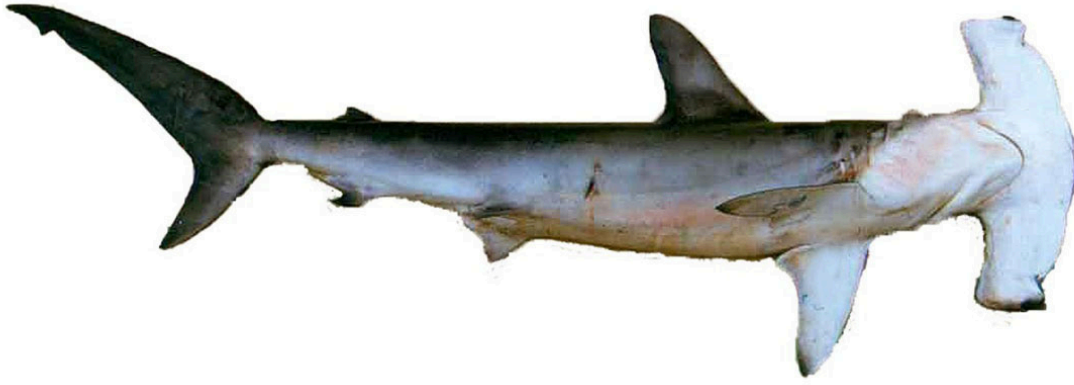
## 7. Bonnethead **Status Unknown**

*Sphyrna tiburo*

Up to 5 ft • Up to 24 lbs • Small Coastal Shark group

Occasional summer visitor to the lower Bay. The smallest hammerhead species. Shovel-shaped head.

Notably omnivorous: grazes on seagrass in addition to fish, crabs, and shrimp. Prefers depths of 30–80 feet.



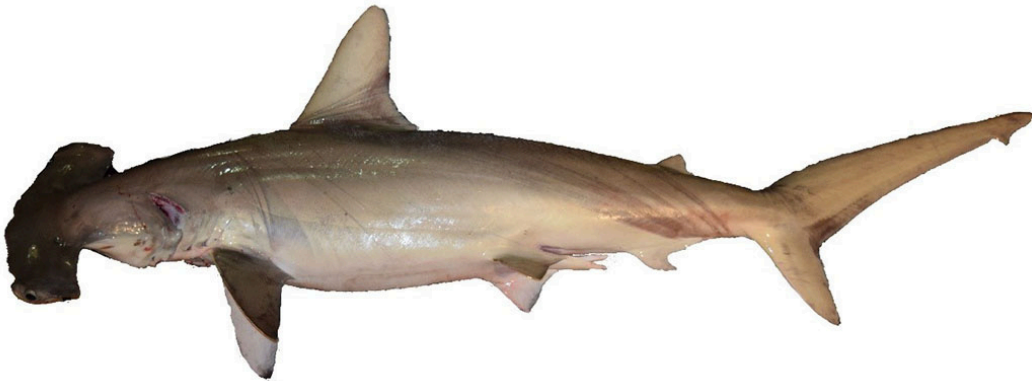
## 8. Smooth Hammerhead

*Sphyrna zygaena*

Up to 13 ft • Large Coastal Shark management group

Uncommon summer and fall visitor. Recorded as far north as the mouth of the Choptank River. Tolerates cooler waters than other hammerheads. Hammer-shaped head lacks the indentation found on scalloped hammerheads.

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## 9. Scalloped Hammerhead **ESA Threatened/Endangered**

*Sphyrna lewini*

Up to 12 ft • Up to 335 lbs • CITES Appendix II

Only a few records near the mouth of the Bay. Listed under the Endangered Species Act. The Central & Southwest Atlantic population is Threatened; the Eastern Atlantic population is Endangered. Primarily threatened by commercial fishing for the shark fin trade.

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## 10. Atlantic Angel Shark **Prohibited**

*Squatina dumeril*

Up to 5 ft • High fishing vulnerability • Must be released if caught

Rare summer and fall visitor to the lower Bay. Flat-bodied, resembles a ray. An ambush predator that lies on the bottom. Low resilience: population doubling time of 4.5 to 14 years.



## 11. Atlantic Sharpnose Shark **Not Overfished**

*Rhizoprionodon terraenovae*

Up to 4 ft • Small Coastal Shark group

Rare visitor to the lower Bay only. A small, slender coastal shark. White spots visible on body. Migrates seasonally between inshore and offshore waters in large schools separated by sex.



### 12. Dusky Shark **Prohibited • Overfished**

*Carcharhinus obscurus*

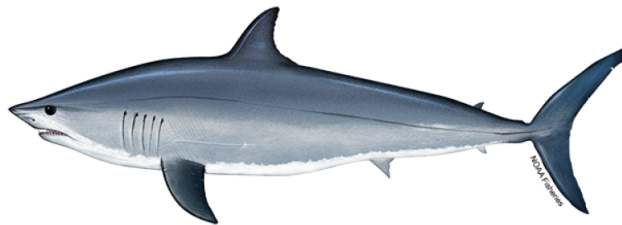
Up to 12 ft • One of the most depleted Atlantic shark species

Formerly fairly common in the Bay; now an infrequent summer visitor. Must be released immediately if caught. Under a federal rebuilding plan. Found across the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans.

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## Maryland Atlantic Coast — Oceanic and Coastal Species

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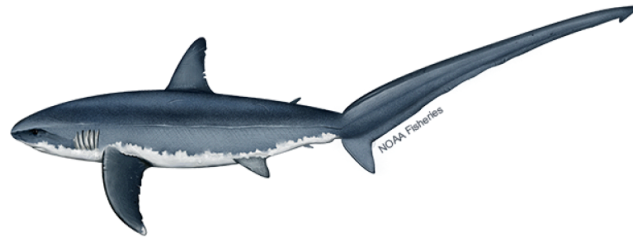


### 13. Shortfin Mako **Overfished • No Retention**

*Isurus oxyrinchus*

Up to 13 ft • Up to 1,100 lbs • Fastest shark (43+ mph)

Found in Maryland's offshore Atlantic waters. U.S. fishermen may not land or retain Atlantic shortfin mako sharks as of July 2022. CITES Appendix II. 3-year reproductive cycle with 18-month gestation. Females mature at approximately 19 years.

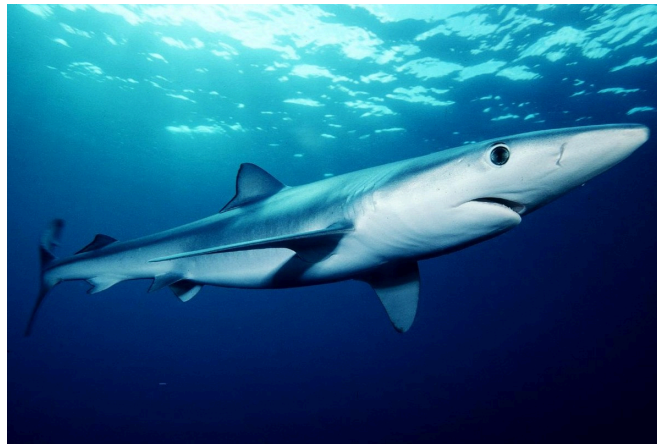


#### 14. Common Thresher Shark Status Unknown

*Alopias vulpinus*

Up to 20 ft • Lifespan: 19–50 years

Found in Maryland's Atlantic waters. Named for its long, scythe-like tail, which can be as long as its body and is used to stun schooling fish before feeding. Most common near land in plankton-rich areas. Highly migratory.



#### 15. Blue Shark IUCN Near Threatened

*Prionace glauca*

Up to 12.5 ft • Lifespan: 20+ years

The most wide-ranging shark species in the world. Found in Maryland's offshore Atlantic waters. Recognizable by vivid blue coloring. One of the fastest-growing sharks. Faces significant bycatch pressure in pelagic longline fisheries. Litters of 35–80 pups.



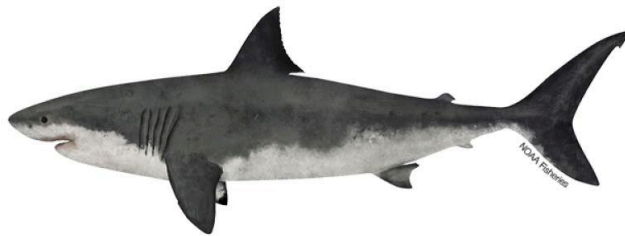
## 16. Porbeagle IUCN Near Threatened • CITES II

*Lamna nasus*

Up to 8 ft • Up to 230 lbs • Lifespan: ~30 years

Limited presence in Maryland's oceanic waters. A cold-water species more common further north. Closely related to the great white shark. Endothermic: can maintain body temperature above surrounding water. North Atlantic stocks seriously depleted by 20th-century overfishing.

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## 17. White Shark Prohibited • CITES II

*Carcharodon carcharias*

Up to 21 ft • Up to 4,500 lbs • Lifespan: 70+ years

Limited presence off Maryland's Atlantic coast. Prohibited species: must be released immediately. Tagged individuals regularly tracked passing through Maryland's coastal waters. Regionally endothermic (partially warm-blooded). The closest living occupant of the megalodon's ecological niche.

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## Complete List: All 41 Managed Species

The 17 species above are described in detail. The full list of 41 species managed under the federal Atlantic HMS framework and Maryland state regulations is below.

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Management Group
<b>Large Coastal Sharks (11 species)</b>			
1	Sandbar Shark	<i>Carcharhinus plumbeus</i>	Research only
2	Bull Shark	<i>Carcharhinus leucas</i>	Authorized
3	Blacktip Shark	<i>Carcharhinus limbatus</i>	Authorized
4	Spinner Shark	<i>Carcharhinus brevipinna</i>	Authorized
5	Tiger Shark	<i>Galeocerdo cuvier</i>	Authorized
6	Lemon Shark	<i>Negaprion brevirostris</i>	Authorized
7	Nurse Shark	<i>Ginglymostoma cirratum</i>	Authorized
8	Smooth Hammerhead	<i>Sphyrna zygaena</i>	Authorized
9	Great Hammerhead	<i>Sphyrna mokarran</i>	Authorized
10	Scalloped Hammerhead	<i>Sphyrna lewini</i>	ESA Threatened
11	Silky Shark	<i>Carcharhinus falciformis</i>	Authorized
<b>Small Coastal Sharks (4 species)</b>			
12	Atlantic Sharpnose Shark	<i>Rhizoprionodon terraenovae</i>	Authorized
13	Bonnethead	<i>Sphyrna tiburo</i>	Authorized
14	Blacknose Shark	<i>Carcharhinus acronotus</i>	Authorized
15	Finetooth Shark	<i>Carcharhinus isodon</i>	Authorized
<b>Pelagic Sharks (4 species)</b>			
16	Shortfin Mako	<i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i>	No retention
17	Common Thresher	<i>Alopias vulpinus</i>	Authorized
18	Blue Shark	<i>Prionace glauca</i>	Authorized
19	Porbeagle	<i>Lamna nasus</i>	Authorized
<b>Prohibited Sharks (20 species — must be released immediately)</b>			
20	White Shark	<i>Carcharodon carcharias</i>	Prohibited
21	Basking Shark	<i>Cetorhinus maximus</i>	Prohibited
22	Whale Shark	<i>Rhincodon typus</i>	Prohibited
23	Sand Tiger Shark	<i>Carcharias taurus</i>	Prohibited
24	Dusky Shark	<i>Carcharhinus obscurus</i>	Prohibited
25	Atlantic Angel Shark	<i>Squatina dumeril</i>	Prohibited
26	Oceanic Whitetip	<i>Carcharhinus longimanus</i>	Prohibited
27	Night Shark	<i>Carcharhinus signatus</i>	Prohibited
28	Longfin Mako	<i>Isurus paucus</i>	Prohibited
29	Bigeye Thresher	<i>Alopias superciliosus</i>	Prohibited

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Management Group
30	Narrowtooth Shark	<i>Carcharhinus brachyurus</i>	Prohibited
31	Bignose Shark	<i>Carcharhinus altimus</i>	Prohibited
32	Caribbean Reef Shark	<i>Carcharhinus perezii</i>	Prohibited
33	Caribbean Sharpnose	<i>Rhizoprionodon porosus</i>	Prohibited
34	Galapagos Shark	<i>Carcharhinus galapagensis</i>	Prohibited
35	Smalltail Shark	<i>Carcharhinus porosus</i>	Prohibited
36	Bigeye Sand Tiger	<i>Odontaspis noronhai</i>	Prohibited
37	Sevengill Shark	<i>Heptranchias perlo</i>	Prohibited
38	Bigeye Sixgill Shark	<i>Hexanchus nakamurai</i>	Prohibited
39	Sixgill Shark	<i>Hexanchus griseus</i>	Prohibited
<b>Smoothhound Sharks (2 species in MD waters)</b>			
40	Smooth Dogfish	<i>Mustelus canis</i>	Authorized
41	Florida Smoothhound	<i>Mustelus norrisi</i>	Authorized

Additionally, Spiny Dogfish (*Squalus acanthias*) is managed under a separate federal plan but counted among Maryland's coastal shark species.

#### Sources:

Maryland DNR Fisheries Service, "Shark Facts" — [dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/pages/coastal/sharkfacts.aspx](http://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/pages/coastal/sharkfacts.aspx)

Chesapeake Bay Program, "Are There Sharks in the Chesapeake Bay?" — [chesapeakebay.net](http://chesapeakebay.net)

NOAA Fisheries, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species — [fisheries.noaa.gov](http://fisheries.noaa.gov)

50 CFR 635, Appendix A — Atlantic HMS Species Tables

Images: NOAA Fisheries (public domain); Florida Museum of Natural History (NMFS credit)

Prepared as Appendix A to written testimony on HB 97 (State Designations — State Shark — Megalodon)

House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee • March 17, 2026