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MEDIA RELEASE

World symposium strives to save sharks

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Nick Dulvy, 778.387.4124 (cell), 778.782.4124 (w), nick_dulvy@sfu.ca, Coquitlam resident
Carol Thorbes, PAMR, 778.782.3035, cthorbes@sfu.ca

Two scientists, [Nick Dulvy](#) at Simon Fraser University (SFU) and Rupert Ormond at the [Save Our Seas Foundation](#), are using a world conference to advance their crusade to save sharks.

Dulvy is an SFU associate professor of biology and co-chair of [the International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\) Shark Specialist Group](#). Rupert Ormond is chief scientist for the non-profit Save Our Seas Foundation based in Geneva, Switzerland. The group funds shark conservation research worldwide, including at SFU.

Dulvy and Ormond are mounting a symposium at the second [International Marine Conservation Congress \(IMCC2\)](#). It's main message: The world must get serious about preserving sharks or it will lose whole chapters in the book of life.

The IMCC2, expected to draw 1000 plus delegates worldwide, takes place May 13-20 in Victoria. Themed [Making Marine Science Matter](#), the congress aims to advance marine conservation by bringing together scientists, managers, policy makers and science-based producers to inform policy change and implementation.

More than a quarter of the world's 1,100 known shark species are in danger of extinction, and only a quarter are safe according to the IUCN Red List.

Scientists cite two factors as creating a perfect storm for shark extinction. One is over exploitation through targeted (shark fin soup is valued at half billion dollars worldwide) and incidental (targeting other fish) fishing. And, most species grow slowly and have a low birth rate after a long pregnancy, which limits their ability to withstand overfishing.

Dulvy and Ormond hope their [symposium](#) — *Securing the Conservation of Sharks & Rays*, Tuesday, May 17 at 4:45 pm at the Victoria Conference Centre — will spearhead an international five-year plan for securing sharks' survival globally.

"About a third of Canada's 63 known sharks and rays are threatened. Canada has a long history of environmental protection and we need to apply that conservation ethic to the ocean too," says Dulvy.

"Some shark species, such as the enormous basking shark, last seen in B.C. in 2004 and not protected until 2010, are among our oldest ancestors. They had the first complex brains and spines. They were among the first animals to give birth to live young. There is so much they could tell us about the evolution of life."

"The key challenge is securing a brighter future for sharks," says Ormond. "An urgent and essential step toward sustainability is to minimize the catch of endangered shark and ray species."

Backgrounder on IMCC2 congress

Quotes from Nick Dulvy, SFU associate professor of biology and co-chair of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Shark Specialist Group, about symposium:

“We urgently need to protect and manage shark fisheries and trade in a sustainable manner and the recent failure to list sharks and tunas at the [Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITIES\)](#) shows the scale of the problem. Canada did the world a disservice by leading the defeat of shark preservation proposals at the 2007 CITIES meeting.”

“Canada should get on board with the global momentum to make sure any sharks harvested are landed with their fins still attached. We need to do as the U.S. and Central America have done — enforce an outright ban on shark fining at sea.”

“Currently, shark fining at sea for sharkfin soup, a favoured dish at traditional Chinese weddings, is driving overexploitation of sharks, elevating their risk of extinction.”

“The spotted spiny dogfish shark found off B.C. is an extreme example of sharks’ low reproductive potential. Females of this species don’t reach sexual maturity until age 30 at least. They are pregnant for nearly two years and are thought to live as long as 100 years.”

“Sharks, along with the endangered blue fin tuna, serve to remind us of the scale and the extent of the impact of fisheries on wide ranging migratory species and the influence of the fishing industry on conservation policy. Short term economic interests are preventing the federal fisheries department from heeding scientists’ advice that the future of sharks needs to be secured for all Canadians now.”

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8888 University Drive
Burnaby, B.C.
Canada V5A 1S6

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