

Identifying Sharks in Atlantic Canada

There are over 20 species of sharks that occur in Atlantic Canadian waters, many of which are considered at-risk. As apex predators, sharks have an important role in maintaining healthy ecosystems. Below are eight different shark species found in our waters.

White Shark



Adult length: 2.5 to > 6.0 m (8 to >20 ft)

Conservation status: Endangered (Species at Risk Act)

White Sharks have a large, round body and a crescent-shaped tail. They are grey or brownish on top, with a white underside. They have a triangle-shaped dorsal fin, and black tips on the undersides of their pectoral fins.

White Sharks may be curious and could be attracted to boats or other objects in the water. They are not likely to breach, but could do so when hunting large fish or marine mammals.

Greenland Shark



Adult length: 3.5 – 5 m (11 – 16 ft)

Conservation status: Not assessed

Greenland Sharks have a thick-set brown or grey body, with occasional white spots or black streaks on their back. They have small eyes, small pectoral and dorsal fins, and an asymmetrical tail fin.

Greenland Sharks are sluggish and slow moving. They have been known to scavenge and have been observed around fishing boats.

Shortfin Mako



Adult length: 1.5 – 4 m (5 – 13 ft)

Conservation status: Endangered (COSEWIC)

Shortfin Makos have a white underside, and are metallic blue on top. They have a slender, pointed snout, a crescent-shaped tail, and relatively short pectoral fins.

Shortfin Makos can jump out of the water up to 6 m (20 ft), and are known to be very active when hooked.



Blue Shark



Adult length: 2 – 3.8 m (6.5 – 12.5 ft)

Conservation status: Not at Risk (COSEWIC)

Blue Sharks have a long, slender body, which is dark blue on top and white underneath. They have large eyes, a long snout, and long narrow pectoral fins. The upper lobe of their tail is larger than the lower lobe. They are the most common large shark encountered at sea, and are known to thrash around when hooked.

Basking Shark



Adult length: 9 – 12 m (29.5 – 39 ft)

Conservation status: Special Concern (COSEWIC)

Basking Sharks have a greyish-brown body, often with a mottled appearance. They have a pointed snout, an extremely large mouth, and five massive gill slits. The first dorsal fin is rounded and set far back on the body. They tend to bask on the surface and are easily approached by small boats.

Black Dogfish



Adult length: 0.6 – 0.85 m (2 – 2.8 ft)

Conservation status: Not assessed

Black Dogfish have a heavy set black or brown body. They have a spine on the leading edge of each dorsal fin.

Black Dogfish are deep-water sharks and are rarely encountered, though they are sometimes accidentally caught on longlines or in deep-water trawls.

Porbeagle

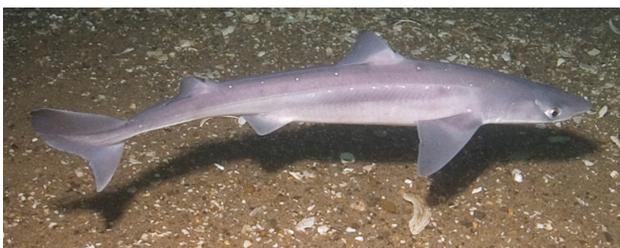


Adult length: 1.5 – 3 m (5 – 10 ft)

Conservation status: Endangered (COSEWIC)

Porbeagles have a stout body that is blue-grey on the back and white underneath. They have large dark eyes and a short, blunt snout. They have a white patch on the trailing edge of their first dorsal fin. They are known to thrash around when hooked.

Spiny Dogfish



Adult length: 0.75 – 1.3 m (2.5 – 4 ft)

Conservation status: Special Concern (COSEWIC)

Spiny Dogfish have a grey or brown body, often with white spots, and a pale grey or white underside. They have a spine on the leading edge of each dorsal fin, and an asymmetrical tail. They often live in schools.