



## FACT SHEET

### BLACKSPOTTED SMOOTHHOUND SHARK

*Mustelus mustelus*

**Family:** Triakidae

**Other common names:** Common smoothhound, Gummy shark, Hondhaai

#### Description

The largest of the houndsharks, this species has a rather slender body and a flattened head. The second dorsal fin is nearly as big as the first and the caudal fin has a distinct notch towards the tip. The general body colour is greyish brown, with most specimens having distinct black spots on the upper flanks.

#### Distribution

Mediterranean, Eastern Atlantic and South-West Indian Ocean. In southern African waters they are found from the lower KwaZulu-Natal south coast to Namibia.

#### Habitat


Usually found in shallow, inshore waters over sand and rocky reefs but may also be found offshore to depths greater than 300 m. Sexual segregation has been shown, with large mature females making more frequent use of shallower water. Juveniles normally found closer to shore in sheltered bays.

#### Feeding

Crustaceans and other invertebrates, with larger sharks taking larger prey such as octopus and spiny lobsters.

#### Movement

Adults migrate seasonally inshore to sheltered bays such as Saldanha and Algoa Bay, where pupping occurs. Juveniles appear to be fairly resident.

Reproduction	They mature at 95-140 cm total length at an age of 7-12 years, with males maturing smaller and earlier than females. Breeding occurs from October to January throughout their distribution but seldom north of Algoa Bay. They are viviparous and give birth to between 4-23 pups.
Age and growth	They can reach a maximum size of 173 cm total length, a weight of 31 kg and have been aged up to a maximum of 24 years.
Current status	A recent stock assessment (2019) has shown that smoothhound sharks are overexploited in South African waters and that current catches are above the maximum sustainable yield. They have been evaluated as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List (2009). South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) List: Smoothhounds are listed as Orange for those caught by the commercial linefishery and Red for those caught by demersal longlines on the SASSI List.
	
Capture	Caught by shore anglers, recreational and commercial ski-boat fishers and by demersal longlining and trawling. Smoothhound sharks are sometimes targeted by commercial fishers in the absence of high value bony fish, primarily for the "flake" fillet industry which exports to Australia. Smaller sharks have a higher market value. Fins are exported to Asian markets but are of lower value.
Current recreational fishing regulations	<b>Daily bag limit:</b> 1 per person per day <b>Minimum size limit:</b> None <b>Closed Season:</b> None <b>Other regulations:</b> None <b>Marine protected areas (MPAs):</b> Based on the distribution of smoothhound sharks around the South African coast, there are a number of no-take MPAs which are likely to provide protection for this species including Addo, De Hoop, Agulhas Banks and Langebaan.
Reference	Information from the ORI Fish App. <a href="http://www.saambr.org.za">www.saambr.org.za</a>



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