

Recovery & Release

- If the margins of the fish turn pink it is under stress and needs to be put back in the water as soon as possible
- Revive the fish by towing alongside the boat so that the water flows over its gills or by positioning it so the current flows towards the head
- Keep reviving until the fish is lively and its colour returns
- Recover all fatigued sharks, skates and rays for 5 to 15 minutes or until they swim away strongly

Reporting a Tagged Shark/Skate/Ray

If you happen to catch a fish with a tag in it, please take the time to do the following:

- Take a photo of the fish and the tag (clean debris off tag if dirty)
- Record tag number
- Record species
- Record sex if known
- Record recapture location (GPS co-ordinates)
- Measure total length (cm)
- Record date, time, and method of recapture

Contact IFI: shane.oreilly@fisheriesireland.ie

<https://www.fisheriesireland.ie/what-we-do/research/marine-sportfish-tagging-programme>

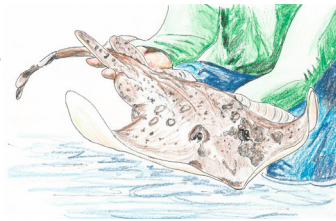
Acknowledgements

IFI acknowledges the great support of anglers who, through voluntary catch and release, and by providing catch and fish stock data, have contributed to the conservation of, and scientific & management advice for shark, skates and rays in recent years.

Cover photo courtesy of www.rosquill.com

Correct way to hold Sharks, Skates & Rays

The correct way to hold any fish is to support the weight of the fish as much as possible when out of the water. For the larger sharks, this usually means two people should hold the fish to ensure the whole length of the fish is fully supported. For smaller sharks and for rays, one person can hold the fish using an arm or hand under the body while the other hand holds the tail.



Avoid lifting or holding fish upright, either by the head or by the tail as this can cause damage to internal organs and gills or spiracles.



Best Practice Angling and Handling of Sharks, Skates and Rays



Iascach Iníre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland

Sustainability & Conservation

As anglers we have a responsibility to do everything that we can to minimise harm to the fish we catch. Sharks (including all dogfish species), skates and rays are much sought after sport fish in Irish waters, but they can be vulnerable to over-fishing with the result that stocks of some of our most popular angling species are in steep decline. Most anglers already adopt a conservation-oriented approach by practicing Catch & Release for these species, and it is critical that we continue to do so.

For Catch & Release to have maximum impact, we need to ensure that fish survive once they have been released. Seeing a fish swim away does not guarantee it will survive. There are several precautions that anglers can take while fishing that will greatly improve the chances of survival post release.

This brochure provides guidelines on steps we can take to ensure we give fish the best chance of survival. They are best summarised by adopting two key principles:



Minimise Time:

Minimising the time from hooking to releasing the fish will reduce fatigue and stress in the fish, and leave it in a better position to recover



Maximise Technique:

Perfecting our angling and fish handling techniques will help prevent unnecessary injury to the fish, which could result in long term damage

Gear and Technique

Hook Damage

Deep hooking causes tissue damage and increases the time taken to get the fish back into the water, so:



Always watch for the bite so that the fish does not ingest the hook deeply



Use **wide gape barbless 'J hooks'** as they are the easiest to remove, thus minimising damage and speeding up release



Use corrodible hooks so they can degrade if they can't be removed

Fight time

The longer the fight time, the more tired and stressed the fish can become. Try to keep fight time to a minimum by:



Using suitably rated tackle to enable playing the fish quickly



Playing the fish firmly and never fight a fish until exhaustion



Being prepared to follow a hooked shark to gain line

Unhooking

Similar to the above, the longer you take to unhook the fish, the more stress it will be under. So remember:



Unhooking in water is preferable to bringing a fish onboard



Always have unhooking tools out of your tackle box/bag and ready to be used



Cut any hooks that cannot be removed, they will dissolve over time

Handling

Onboarding

Bringing the fish onboard to unhook it forces it to spend time out of water, meaning it can't 'breathe'. The body is no longer supported by the water, so internal organs are vulnerable. While out of water, fish can be exposed to excessive handling and risk impact with hard surfaces.

Sharks, skates, and rays should be out of water for maximum of 3 minutes. Less than 60 seconds is better. Keep the fish in the water if at all possible.

Damage can be caused by:



Using a gaff – can puncture internal organs



Hauling over gunwale – squeezes internal organs



Unsupported holding by tail, head, gills or spiracles – compresses organs



Fish thrashing – risks tissue damage due to striking hard objects

Handling is better when:



Using a net, sling, tarp or access door if you have one, to bring the fish onboard and return it to the water



Lifting clear of the gunwale using two people in coordination



Handling the fish carefully and only with wet hands



Holding the fish correctly ensuring all organs are supported



Covering the eyes with a damp cloth to pacify, and using other anglers to hold the fish in place