

HOTSPOTS:

The hotspot maps indicate areas crucial for basking sharks, identified from The Wildlife Trusts' surveys 2002 - 2006.

- the clear hatched area - shark awareness zone where a careful look out should be kept for sharks at all times.
- the pink hatched areas – caution zones, where there is a high likelihood of encountering a shark at the surface, and where large shoal sizes and courtship-like behaviour have been consistently recorded.

During May to October, within the pink areas a maximum speed of 6 knots or less should be maintained along with extra care and a vigilant look out for sharks at, or just below, the surface.

OTHER IMPORTANT BASKING SHARK SITES:

Hotspots are not the only places where sharks can regularly be seen. Sharks are often sighted around the other Small Isles (Rum, Eigg and Muck), and also around the Treshnish Isles, Caliach Point and Ardmore Point on Mull, for example. A careful look out should be kept for sharks when navigating through these areas in season. Further work to investigate more remote areas of Scotland is necessary.

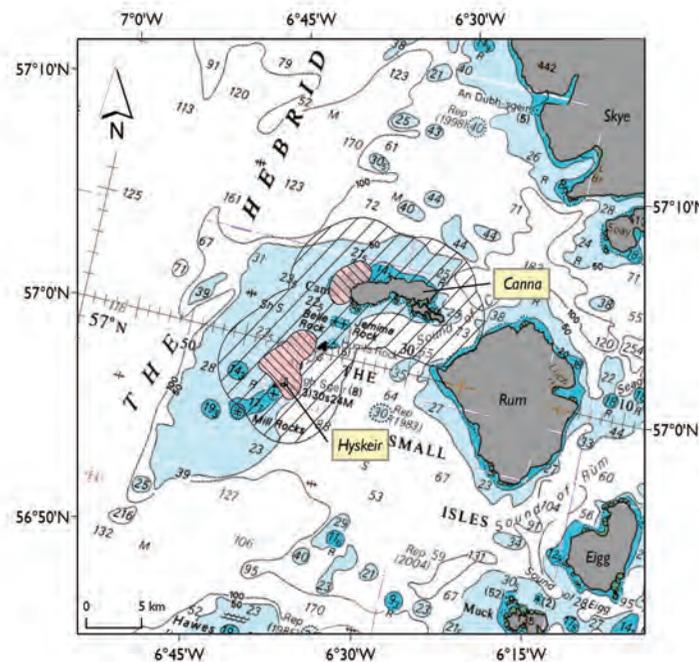
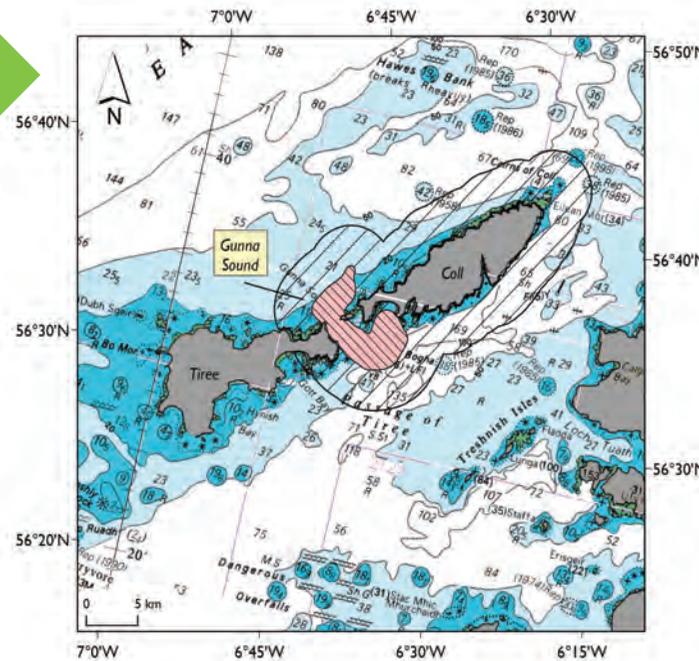
WHERE TO REPORT YOUR SIGHTINGS:

The national basking shark reporting scheme allows on-line reporting and is operated by the Marine Conservation Society:

http://www.mcsuk.org/marineworld/sightings_report

The Wildlife Trusts also allows on-line reporting of basking shark sightings, as well as those of whales, dolphins and porpoises:

<http://baskingsharks.wildlifetrusts.org/helpus.php>



BASKING SHARK HOTSPOTS IN WEST SCOTLAND



Scottish Natural Heritage
All of nature for all of Scotland

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INTRODUCTION:

Research has identified two hotspots that are highly important for basking sharks. These are areas where sharks gather to feed and find potential mates, sometimes occurring in large shoals of up to 100. Sharks at the surface increase the risks of accidental collisions from small craft navigating through these areas.

The purpose of this poster is to advise all small commercial and leisure craft users of the likely seasonal (May – October) presence of the basking shark in the waters around Coll, Canna and the Hyskeir islet.

Formerly extensively hunted, the basking shark is now a highly protected species. It is an offence

- to deliberately or recklessly capture, kill, injure or disturb any basking shark.
- to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of any basking shark.
- to deliberately or recklessly harass any basking shark.

FEEDING BEHAVIOUR:

Most sharks will swim at around 2 knots when feeding at the surface. They can turn extremely quickly and in a very short distance without any warning. Concentrating solely on feeding they are oblivious to the approach of a vessel. Sharks feeding are not always highly visible at the surface. Often they are just below the surface and out of sight – the presence of one shark at the surface may also indicate that there are others nearby.

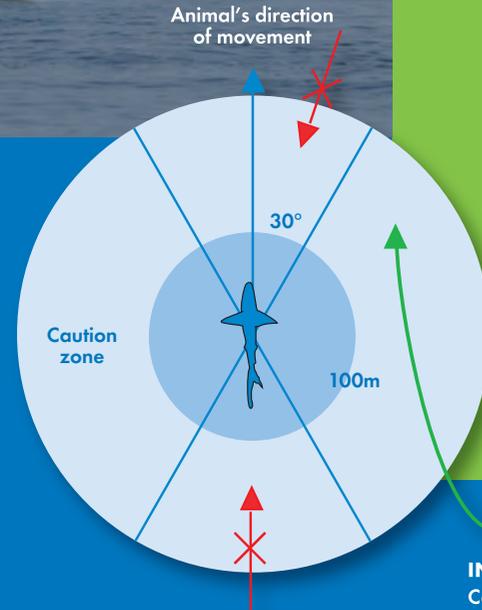


BREACHING:

Sharks can leap clear of the water, known as breaching, and usually only displayed when in groups. Basking sharks seem to be unaware of the presence of craft when they breach, and can present a serious risk to small craft by colliding with or landing on them.

COURTSHIP BEHAVIOUR:

Courtship consists of two or more sharks swimming nose to tail or touching one another as they swim along. Sharks will not move out of your way when in this trance-like state.



RECOMMENDED APPROACH TO MOVING ANIMALS.

ACTIONS TO TAKE BY SKIPPERS:

- Keep a careful look out for sharks.
- Keep speed to a minimum at all times if you sight a shark.
- Engine noise should be kept to a minimum and sharks should not be approached from 30 degrees of ahead.
- Look out for signs of agitation, diving, or tail thrashing which may indicate that your presence is unwelcome and the shark is being disturbed.
- Sharks should be given a wide berth, to avoid disturbing their behaviour and reduce risks of collisions.
- Sharks sometimes thrash their tails and dive before breaching, so if you observe this behaviour or sharks breaching in your vicinity it is best to move out of the area steadily and quietly.
- Do not approach closer than 100m.

INJURIES:

Collision injuries can sometimes be seen in the form of jagged injuries to the dorsal fin or tail. Accidental collisions can be avoided by a combination of slow speed, a good look out and careful boat handling. A collision with a big shark may also damage or sink a small boat.

