



Shark
Conservation
Fund



2025 Impact Report:

Turning Long-Term Investment
into Real-World Protection

An Institutional Moment

How sustained philanthropic investment helped transform the global trade of the second most endangered group of vertebrates: sharks and rays.

For decades, the international shark fin trade moved largely unchecked through major hubs such as the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Singapore. Tens of millions of fins flowed annually through these markets, generating hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue, with limited oversight and weak enforcement.

The global push to change that system has been years in the making. When SCF launched, we entered a moment when some longtime funders were stepping back – and we made a deliberate choice to sustain and expand long-term work that required staying power, carrying forward the at-times unglamorous technical policy and advocacy campaigns already underway to reshape how the world manages the global shark trade, and supporting data-intensive research long enough to unlock enforcement.

By funding a decade’s long advocacy campaign, backstopped by the monitoring of the fin trade, SCF helped build on and accelerate that change – helping move governments from debate to decisions, and from listings to implementation. As a result, today approximately 96% of the global shark fin trade is regulated under CITES. Shipments moving through major hubs now require permits to demonstrate legal and sustainable sourcing; customs officials are empowered to seize illegal products; and trade that once relied on opacity is increasingly documented, monitored, and enforced.

This progress did not happen overnight, and the work is not finished. It reflects what sustained philanthropic investment can achieve when evidence, advocacy, and implementation are supported over time. Within SCF’s broader portfolio, the regulation of the global shark fin trade stands out as a clear example of how long-term strategies can translate into measurable change.

That work matters because sharks and rays matter. As keystone species, sharks and rays play an essential role in ocean health, fisheries stability, and coastal livelihoods. Their decline threatens not only marine biodiversity, but the systems people and communities depend on.



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This report outlines why sharks and rays matter, how SCF works to protect them, and what that approach delivered in 2025 – from strengthened trade regulation and fisheries management to habitat protection and on-the-water results. Together, these stories show how long-term investment can move conservation from aspiration to impact.



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2025 Impact Snapshot

In 2025, SCF and its partners demonstrated what sustained, strategic conservation investment can achieve:

- 29** **Global trade prohibitions for 29 endangered shark species** representing the first prohibitions of commercially traded species. 
- 40** **Trade regulations adopted for over 40 shark species** finally securing sustainable and legal trade requirements for species caught for their meat and liver oil. 
- 7** **Creation of seven new protected areas** in priority shark habitats in the Philippines, Cuba, Tanzania, and Tunisia reducing shark mortality by at least 50% in each location. 
- 7** **Seven species protections secured**, including mako sharks, scalloped hammerheads, oceanic whitetip, and thresher sharks on the Atlantic coast of Mexico, a major shark catching country. 
- Full protection for basking sharks and white sharks** across the Atlantic Ocean.
- Closed the Pilbara Trawl Fishery in Australia**, ending the primary source of mortality for critically endangered green sawfish in the area.
- 90% reduction in juvenile hammerhead mortality in Los Morros de Jurubirá, Colombia**, preventing approximately 1,000 shark deaths annually.
- 22 grants awarded totaling \$3.5M**, including nine Small Grants selected from 151 applicants across 72 countries.

A Decade of Strategy, Leadership, and Impact

Under the leadership of Lee Crockett (Executive Director, 2017–2025), the Shark Conservation Fund helped transform global shark and ray conservation from fragmented efforts into a globally focused and cooperating system of NGOs and scientists that achieved unprecedented conservation gains.

During this period, SCF sharpened its focus on identifying high-leverage opportunities, investing for the long term, and supporting partners capable of translating science into policy, and policy into action. The results documented in this report – including near-universal international trade rules, strengthened fisheries management across the Atlantic, and the protection of tens of thousands of square kilometers of critical habitat – reflect the cumulative impact of that sustained approach.

As SCF enters its next chapter, it does so with a proven strategy, a strong global network, and momentum built over a decade of disciplined leadership and partnership.



Why Sharks and Rays Matter

For more than 400 million years, sharks and rays have played a foundational role in shaping marine ecosystems. As important predators, they regulate food webs and help maintain the health of coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds – ecosystems that support biodiversity, buffer coastlines, and store vast amounts of carbon.

Their decline is not simply a biodiversity crisis. **Healthy shark and ray populations underpin fisheries, sustain coastal economies, and contribute directly to ocean resilience.**

Losing them would destabilize marine ecosystems and threaten the livelihoods of millions of people worldwide.

The Challenge

Today, one in three shark and ray species face extinction.

Overfishing, driven by the global trade in fins and meat, habitat degradation, and lack of effective regulations have pushed many populations to the brink.

This crisis is compounded by shark biology. Most species grow slowly, mature late, and produce few offspring. Once populations collapse, recovery can take decades – or may never occur. Without decisive, coordinated action, many species could disappear within the next decade.

Our Approach: Sustained Strategy for Systemic Change

SCF was created to halt the decline and extinction of sharks and rays by tackling the problem at scale. Our strategy focuses on:

- Transforming fisheries management so sharks and rays are effectively managed – regardless of whether they are targeted or secondary catch.
- Preventing extinctions by securing protections for the most threatened species before losses become irreversible.
- Building durable protection through the Shark Biodiversity Initiative, a global network of protected areas in the habitats sharks and rays need most.

Our role is to identify where investment can unlock the greatest impact, sustain that investment over time, and help translate evidence into durable policy and enforcement.



2025 Highlights

Securing the First Trade Bans for Commercially Traded Sharks

In 2025, years of SCF-supported advocacy campaigns delivered concrete results across the global shark trade system.

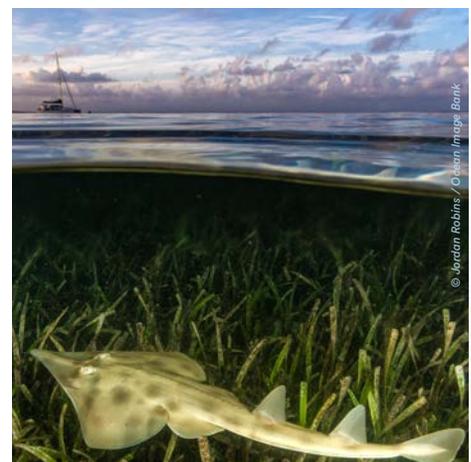
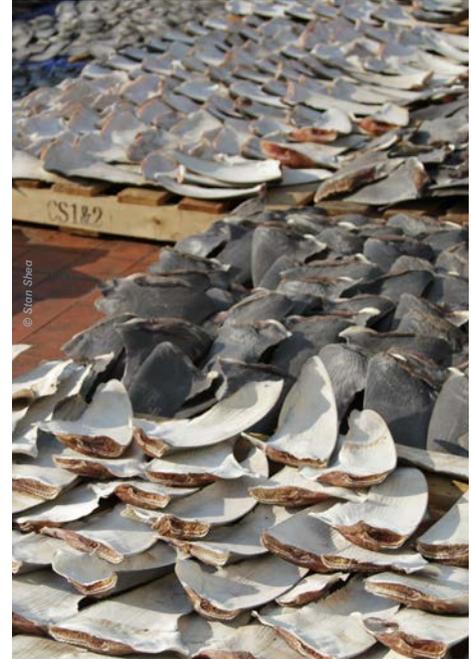
At the November 2025 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), meeting, international protections were enhanced or extended to approximately 70 shark and ray species, bringing over 96% of the global shark fin trade and 70% of the global shark meat trade under regulatory oversight.

As a result, **commercial trade is now prohibited for species such as whale sharks, oceanic whitetips, devil rays, wedgefish, and guitarfish.** Other commercially exploited species – including gulper sharks, whose liver oil used in cosmetics and smooth-hound and tope sharks traded for meat – may now be traded only with permits demonstrating that the fishery does not threaten the species survival.

These new protections did not occur in a vacuum. Less than a decade ago, large scale sustainable trade regulations for endangered shark species were considered implausible – let alone trade prohibitions – even for species with over 80% global declines. SCF’s long-term support for global trade management as well as national implementation and the dedication of SCF partners and governments to effectively implement these listings has globally transformed how the world manages sharks and rays.

Sharks are the second most threatened vertebrate group in the world and yet remain one of the least managed worldwide. SCF’s long-term support for global management change continues to give them the best fighting chance against widespread extinction. And SCF partners continue to turn this vision into reality.

Together, these outcomes reflect how sustained investment in science and advocacy can translate into enforceable rules – and measurable protection for sharks and rays in global markets.



Fisheries Management Reform: From Regional Decisions to National Action

In 2025, the regional body that manages fisheries across the Atlantic Ocean adopted stronger protections for sharks. These included **bans on keeping basking and white sharks and a 50% reduction in allowable catch for shortfin mako sharks, whose populations remain highly depleted. Importantly, the rules now require countries to count all shark deaths – not just what is landed, but also what is caught and discarded.**

SCF-supported partners also pushed for stronger oversight of these rules. As a result, the fisheries body's compliance committee took a closer look at how countries are following shark conservation measures. While many countries have improved, some are still falling short, highlighting why continued pressure and monitoring matter.

These regional decisions are now changing practices at the national level. In 2025, Mexico announced that tuna longline fishing vessels in the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea can no longer keep, transport, or land several highly threatened shark species, including hammerheads, makos, oceanic whitetips, and silky sharks.

This change reflects years of advocacy by SCF-supported partners and shows how international rules – when backed by sustained engagement – can lead to real, enforceable protections for sharks on the water.



Supporting Local Level Protections for Sharks and Rays

Currently, less than 2% of MPAs include effective management measures for sharks. As governments seek to achieve their 30x30 goals and triple the number of protected areas globally, SCF seeks to ensure that effective shark management measures are adopted wherever possible.

In 2025, SCF partners secured the protection of seven additional priority habitats for sharks and rays. In each of these locations, SCF partners worked closely with local communities, establishing strong shark protections ranging from no-take zones to the removal of the most destructive fishing gear. These measures not only benefit sharks, but also other species and the ecosystems in which they are found.

These protections include the establishment of two no-take zones along a migratory corridor for critically endangered oceanic whitetip sharks in Cuba, the removal of destructive fishing nets in priority habitats for threatened silky and thresher shark species in Tanzania, and the prohibition of shark and ray catch in an MPA in the Philippines.



Project Spotlight: Colombia – Rapid Results Through Partnership

On Colombia's Pacific coast, targeted research revealed that just two fishers were responsible for more than 80% of juvenile scalloped hammerhead mortality in Los Morros de Jurubirá. Rather than imposing punitive measures, SCF grantees worked directly with these fishers.

By shifting to alternative gear and involving fishers in monitoring and stewardship, juvenile hammerhead mortality dropped by 90% within months – preventing an estimated 1,000 shark deaths each year. The fishers became partners in conservation, illustrating how targeted, science-based interventions at the community level can deliver immediate results.

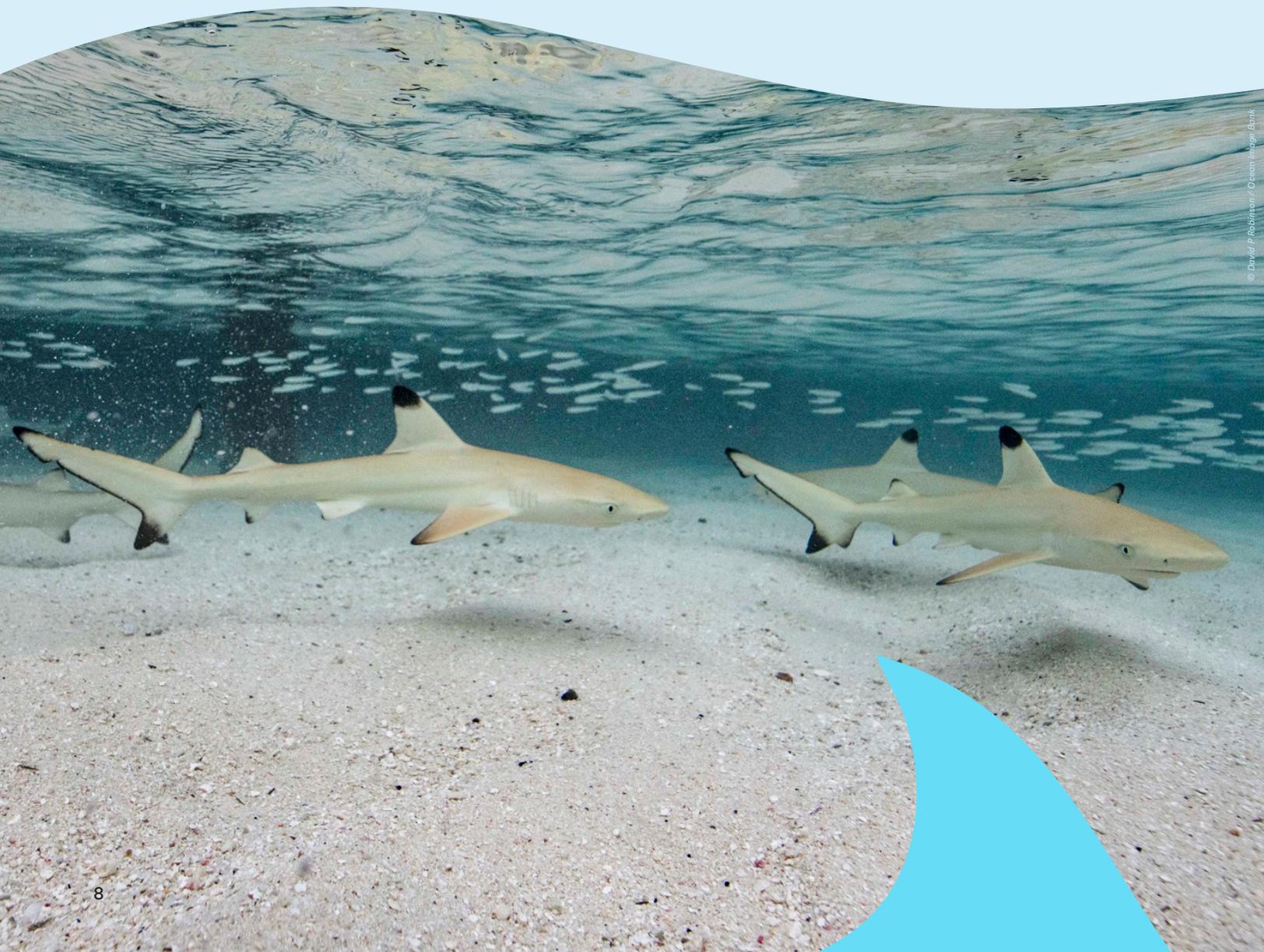


Guiding Conservation Change

SCF focuses on driving conservation change globally by supporting ambitious and strategic advocacy campaigns guided by the best available science. In 2025, SCF-supported research continued to bolster SCF partner strategies around shark and ray trade management.

One key publication, *Trade regulations drive improved global shark and ray management* (M.E. Bond et al., *Marine Policy* 180 (2025)), examined how governments are implementing shark and ray trade protections under CITES. The researchers found that nearly 50% of the 183 CITES Parties evaluated had adopted regulatory reforms in response to listings.

This study validates SCF prioritizing long-term support for implementation of CITES trade regulations and demonstrates the critical role it has and will continue to play in the conservation of sharks and rays globally. To further on-the-water impact, SCF will continue to focus on strengthening implementation and ensuring international commitments translate into community-level conservation actions.





Looking Ahead

The progress of 2025 makes one thing clear: sharks and rays can still be saved – but only through sustained commitment and a clear-eyed strategic vision.

As the global conservation landscape continues to evolve, SCF is focused on what comes next: identifying the highest-impact opportunities and investing for the long term through durable policy reforms, effective enforcement, and protection where it matters most, on the water and in markets.

Building on the progress outlined in this report, SCF will sharpen its focus in 2026 on translating global commitments into national and local actions, strengthening implementation of international trade measures, and advancing enforcement where protections are now within reach. **With your partnership, we can accelerate this next phase of work and continue shifting the trajectory for sharks, rays, and the ocean systems they help sustain.**



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**Shark
Conservation
Fund**

A global leader in shark conservation, SCF specializes in reforming fisheries management, protecting critical habitats, and preventing extinctions through data-driven policy and science-based strategies.

Executive Director during reporting period: Lee Crockett

Current Executive Director: John Mandelman (jmandelman@sharksandrays.org)