Hammerhead Shark Research: Knowledge from the populations in the Canary Islands

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Hammerhead Shark Research is a project that studies hammerhead sharks *Sphyrna spp.* in the Canary Islands with the aim to generate scientific base knowledge that contributes to the development of effective species management strategies.

This pioneering initiative, responds to the total lack of scientific information about these sharks in the Canarian Archipelago. Hammerheads are prone to bycatch in a wide range of fishery gears and interesting for shark fin trade, which make them vulnerable to overexploitation considering their life history characteristics. However, species knowledge in the Canary Islands is limited to the presence of the scalloped hammerhead shark *S. lewini* and the smooth hammerhead shark *S. zygaena*, isolated records about behaviour and scant sighting reports by citizens in social media.

To get insights into the population dynamics, tagging and tissue sampling is combined with biological and fisheries data collection in four of the seven islands of the Canary archipelago. In addition, the professional and recreational fishing communities are actively involved in the study and are, together with citizens, encouraged to report sightings of tagged and untagged individuals. Results of the initial study revealed the identification of two potential critical habitats for *S. zygaena* in the islands of Gran Canaria and Lanzarote. In addition, tissue samples were collected, post-release behaviour monitored and relationship with ectoparasites established. Future data collection and subsequent analysis is required to document the first local knowledge that can help in effective decision making of the species.

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