

Exploring Our Marine



Foras na Mara
Marine Institute

Fin-tastic Irish Sharks

- Irish waters are home to 71 species of shark, skates and rays. From small Sleeper sharks, Dogfish and Catsharks, to larger species like Frilled, Mackerel and Cow sharks, to the second largest shark in the world, the Basking shark!
- In 2018, an Irish-led team of scientists filmed a large school of Black Mouthed catsharks using the Marine Institute's ROV Holland 1. A very large numbers of egg cases were filmed on the seafloor at depths reaching 750 metres.
- The egg cases of sharks, rays and skates are also called 'mermaid's purses' and are distinctive to each species. If you find a mermaid's purse on the shore, report your sighting and send a picture to marinedimensions.ie/purse-search-ireland
- The skeletons of sharks are composed of cartilage much like what our noses and ears are made from. This material is much more flexible and lighter than bone which is perfect for these animals living without the weight of gravity.
- The two largest sharks in the world, have no teeth! Just like Whale Sharks, Basking Sharks are filter feeders, sieving the water with their mouths for plankton.
- The shape of shark scales allows water to glide past them so that they can swim effortlessly and silently. The shape of these 'placcoid' scales has inspired the design of swimsuits helping swimmers glide through the water.



The Marine Institute is Ireland's national agency responsible for marine research, technology development and innovation. By building ocean knowledge and delivering ocean services, the Institute aims to empower Ireland and its people to safeguard and harness our ocean wealth.

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