Special EU Programmes Body
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SeaMonitor

Interreg
Northern Ireland - Ireland - Scotland
European Regional Development Fund

SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES BODY

Project Case Study: Tagging Basking Sharks with the SeaMonitor Project

THEME:

Environment: Manage Marine Protected Areas and Species

FUNDING (ERDF+MATCH):

€4,722,671.31

MATCH FUNDING:

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs; and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

LEAD PARTNER:

Loughs Agency

PROJECT PARTNERS:

Marine Institute, Queens University Belfast, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), University of Glasgow, University Cork College, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Ocean Tracking Network — Dalhousie University, University of California Davis

Start Date: 25/07/2017

End Date: 31/03/2023

www.loughs-agency.org/seamonitor

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Loughs Agency

SeaMonitor is a unique marine research project, studying the seas around Ireland, Western Scotland and Northern Ireland. It will deliver Europe's largest fish counter across the North Channel and support the conservation of vulnerable species including basking shark, cetaceans, salmon, seals and skate. More specifically for the endangered basking sharks that visit our waters each year, the project aims to better understand how the sharks move throughout the North Atlantic and how they are connected.

A recent tagging study of basking sharks confirmed that they can travel across the North Atlantic Ocean. Researchers at Queen's University Belfast and Western University, Canada recorded the second ever known transatlantic movement for this species. The study, recently published in the Journal of Fish Biology, comprises images of a female basking shark captured by an underwater photographer off the coast of Cape Cod, 993 days after it was fitted with a satellite transmitter at Malin Head, the most northern point of Ireland. This international collaboration has produced the first evidence in more than a decade of basking sharks crossing the Atlantic Ocean. The last recorded evidence for transatlantic movement was gathered in 2008 when another female basking shark tagged with a tracking device moved from the Irish Sea to continental waters off the coast of Newfoundland.

"Over 1,500 individual sharks have been equipped with either visual ID or satellite tags in the Atlantic to date, leading to just a single record of transoceanic movement, until now. This new evidence offers invaluable information to help us better understand the movements of this endangered species within an international context."

Lead author on the study: Dr Emmett Johnston, PhD alumni, Queen's University Belfast

"For this animal to show up across the ocean three years after it was tagged in Ireland highlights that we really need an international mind-set when seeking to conserve this species."

Dr Jonathon Houghton, Senior Lecturer, Queen's University Belfast