



Sustainable Forests & Livelihoods (SUFAL) Project

Report on Ocean Guardians - Protecting Threatened Sharks and Rays in Bangladesh

July 2022



Bangladesh Forest Department
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Report on Ocean Guardians - Protecting Threatened Sharks and Rays in Bangladesh

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1. Background

Sharks and rays play a critical role in maintaining a healthy marine ecosystem that sustains fisheries and fishing livelihoods. More than one hundred shark and ray species are confirmed or suspected to occur in Bangladesh's rivers, estuaries, mangrove channels, shallow nearshore waters, and a deep submarine canyon. These habitats support numerous species at high, near-term risk of extinction, including sawfishes, giant freshwater whiprays, rhino rays, hammerhead sharks, and devil rays.

Most sharks and rays grow slowly, mature late and produce few young (Figure 1). This slow reproduction makes sharks and rays particularly vulnerable to overfishing. Market demand drives fishers in Bangladesh to intentionally catch sharks and rays and retain those that are caught unintentionally. Highly valued fins, mobulid gill plates, and skins are exported, and shark and ray meat are consumed locally. Two-thirds of the shark and more than 85% of ray species known or suspected to occur in Bangladesh are threatened with extinction. International trade of 28 of these species is prohibited or regulated under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).



Figure 1. More like humans and other mammals, sharks and rays grow slow and have few young.

The Government of Bangladesh has demonstrated its commitment to strengthening international trade regulations by cosponsoring proposals to list mako and silky sharks, mobula rays, giant guitarfish, and wedgearfish in CITES Appendix II. In September 2021, the Government took their commitment to shark and ray conservation one step further by updating the list of species and genera protected under the Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, 2012. The amended list empowers the strict protection of eight genera and 23 species listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife Act (Figure 2).

The consultancy assignment *Shark and Ray and Associated Species Conservation Strategy Development and Non-Detriment Findings* contributes to the *Sustainable Forests and Livelihoods (SUFAL) Project* implemented by the Bangladesh Forest Department (BFD). The objectives of this assignment are to make major contributions towards (1) Protecting sharks and rays threatened by overexploitation from targeted and non-targeted catches; (2) Ensuring that the exploitation of non-threatened sharks and rays is sustainable and does not

result in them becoming threatened; (3) Sustaining fishing livelihoods through the conservation of threatened sharks and rays and sustainable exploitation of non-threatened species; (4) Developing an informed public about the critical role of sharks and rays in maintaining a healthy ecosystem through mass awareness programs for species conservation; (5) Establishing a strong capacity among government and community stakeholders for the conservation management of sharks and rays; (6) Achieving compliance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) regulating international trade in globally threatened sharks and rays; and (7) Strengthening coordination with the Department of Fisheries regarding shark and ray conservation.

WCS Bangladesh, contracted by the BFD as consultant for this SUFAL assignment, developed and implemented the educational outreach initiative titled *Ocean Guardians – Protecting Threatened Sharks and Rays in Bangladesh* for achieving objective (4) Developing an informed public about the critical role of sharks and rays in maintaining a healthy ocean ecosystem through mass awareness programs for the species conservation. The Ocean Guardians initiative aims to improve public knowledge, particularly among fishers, fish traders, processors, consumers, and law enforcement officers, about the critical role of sharks and rays in maintaining a healthy ocean ecosystem, the threats they face, laws and rules governing their exploitation and trade, recognizing protected species, and safe release procedures. This report presents the strategic development and results to enable and encourage replication in the future.

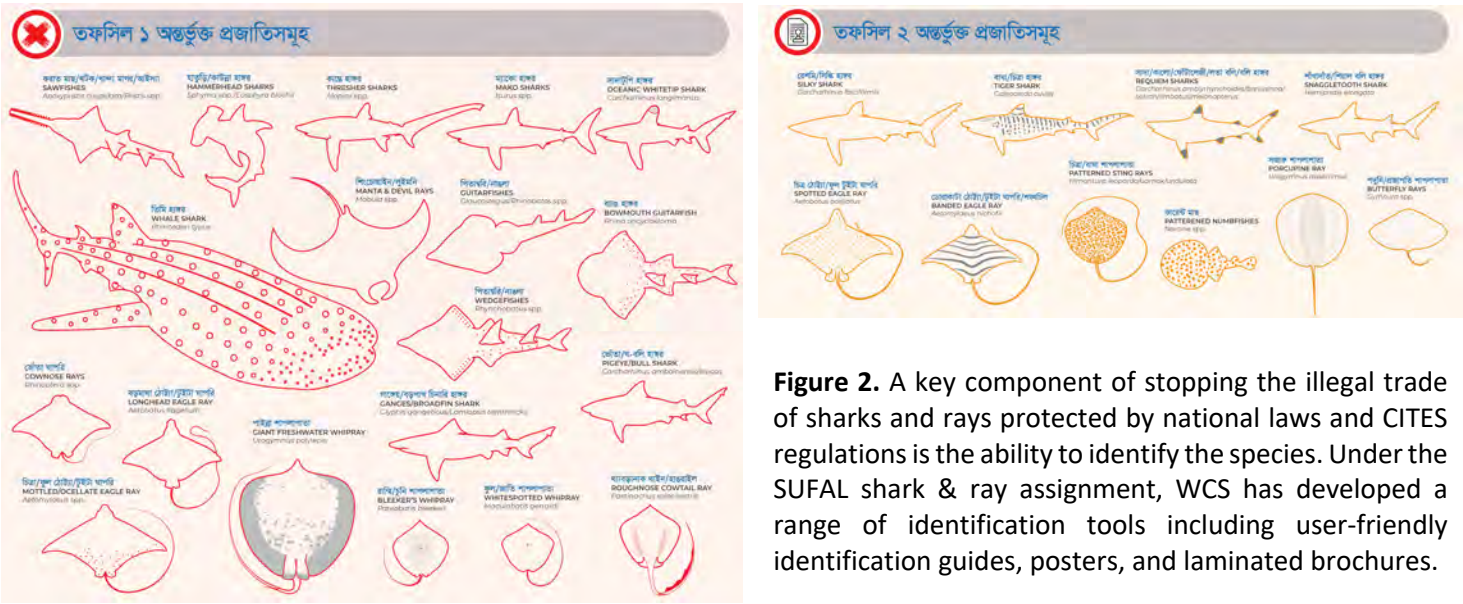


Figure 2. A key component of stopping the illegal trade of sharks and rays protected by national laws and CITES regulations is the ability to identify the species. Under the SUFAL shark & ray assignment, WCS has developed a range of identification tools including user-friendly identification guides, posters, and laminated brochures.

2. Strategic framework

WCS shark and ray outreach initiatives and tools target coastal fishers, fish traders and Government officers. Our innovative and cost-effective outreach encourages positive behavior changes among stakeholders by improving knowledge about the ecological value of sharks and rays in maintaining a healthy ocean supporting healthy people, and about laws

and rules to protect them. The initiative also instills pride in fishers, traders, and law enforcement officers as ocean guardians.

Education and capacity building for improving conservation and management of sharks and rays are guided by a Theory of Change (Figure 3) and supported by a communication strategy (Appendix 1) and communication tools developed and successfully implemented by WCS under the SUFAL consultancy assignment.

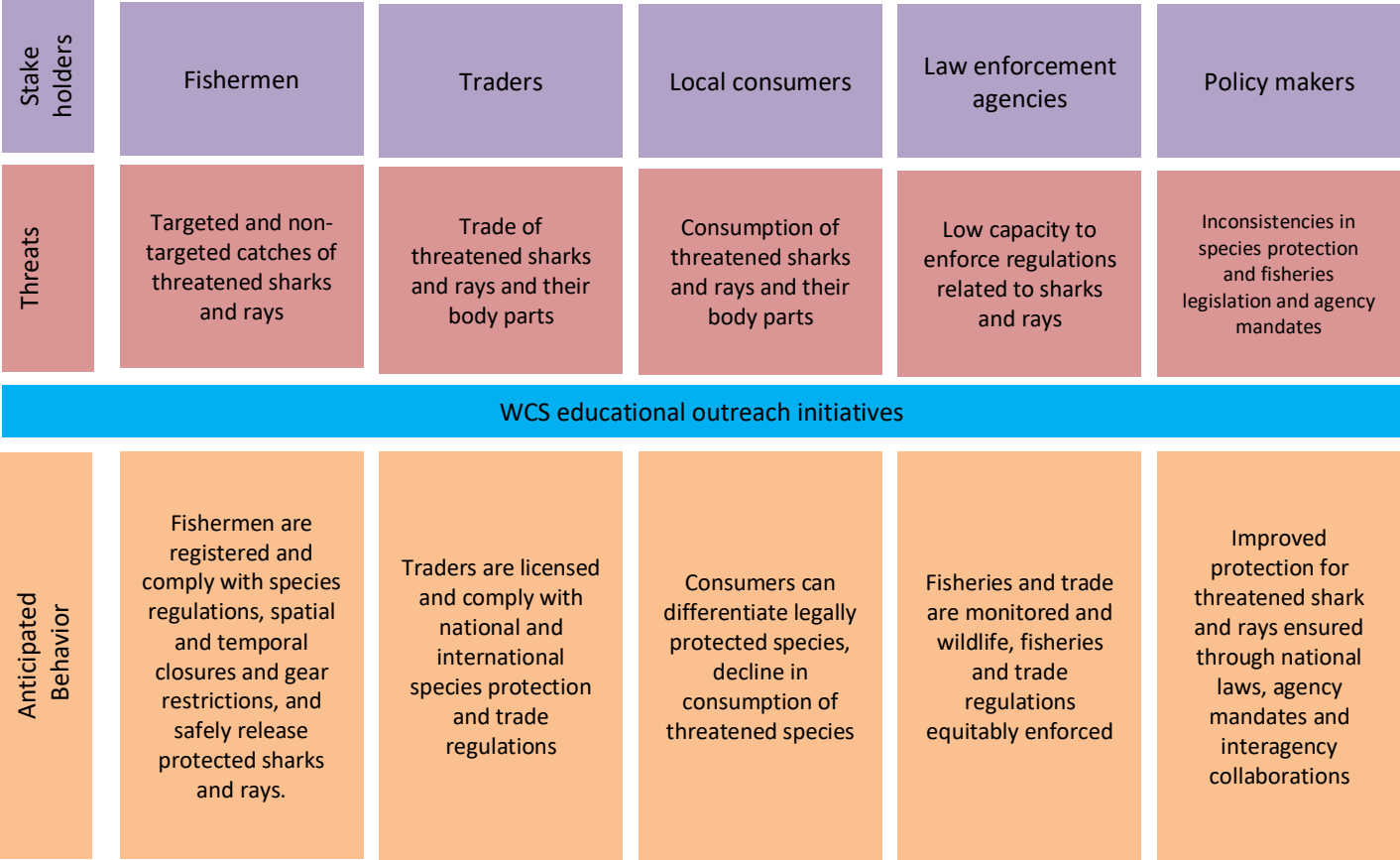


Figure 3. WCS Theory of Change to improve the protection of threatened sharks and rays in Bangladesh by reducing mortalities in fisheries, implementing trade regulations, and reducing domestic consumption.

Developing targeted educational outreach initiatives

Building on over a decade of experience in educational outreach for wildlife conservation in Bangladesh, WCS developed an effective mass awareness program under the SUFAL contractual assignment for sharks and rays, including mobile exhibitions, a short documentary film, species identification guides, and compliance tools. In addition to communicating fascinating facts about the diverse sharks and rays occurring in Bangladesh and their vulnerability to overfishing, driven by domestic and international demand, the educational outreach initiative *Ocean Guardians – Protecting Threatened Sharks and Rays in Bangladesh* raises awareness on species protected by the Bangladesh Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, 2012, and whose trade is regulated by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Defining key messages

Communicating content in concise key messages is a crucial first step for educational outreach and capacity building. To access audiences with low literacy levels and increase knowledge retention, WCS formulates key messages in rhymes and uses symbols or pictograms for visual representation.

Three key messages are communicated through the Ocean Guardians initiative:

- Bangladesh supports a large diversity of sharks and rays that sustains a healthy ocean and healthy people.
- National and international demand for shark and ray products threatens many shark and ray species with extinction because they grow and reproduce slowly and too many are killed.
- International commitments and national laws prohibit the killing and trading of protected sharks and rays or their parts. Violations of these regulations can result in fines or imprisonment.

3. Educational outreach events to reach remote fishing communities

To reach remote fishing communities as well as urban audiences, WCS created a mobile exhibition that can easily be transported by truck, rickshaw van or boat, and set up in local cyclone shelters, schools, government offices or temporary tents. The exhibition is tailored to focal topics and builds on previous outreach efforts.

The exhibition concept is based on the [Ocean Literacy Framework](#) developed by the global ocean science education community, informed by results from WCS marine research, and tailored to inspire people to protect sharks, rays, and other marine wildlife for a healthy ocean supporting healthy people.

Communication is visually enhanced with high-quality photographs, informative panels, and illustrations to ensure access to key information for all visitors, including those with low literacy. Attractive displays combine life-size animal models, captivating photographs, and fascinating facts. Much of the information is communicated through interactive games to maximize retention while assessing understanding in a fun manner (Figure 4).

Trained interpreters guide visitors through the exhibition, explain the games and engage visitors in informal discussions. Because they not only ensure active participation but also provide an opportunity to gain a better understanding of local attitudes and practices, facilitators have proven to be a key part of successful educational outreach activities.



Figure 4. The CITES tool game allowed visitors to learn about the strictly protected sharks and ray using tools that resemble key characteristics of the species (left) while the ‘Wheel of Fortune’ game allowed them to recognize Wildlife Act Schedule I and II listed species using body features (right).

Summary of the six mobile exhibitions conducted under the SUFAL assignment

Mobile exhibitions were conducted from 17–28 April 2022 and 11–16 May 2022 in six coastal fish landing sites where sharks and rays are regularly landed, processed, and traded (Table 1). Trained interpreters facilitated the visits, encouraged questions, explained the games, and engaged visitors in informal discussions. WCS engaged 4,127 visitors in the six exhibitions, including fishers, fish traders, government officials, law enforcement officers, students, and community members. The exhibits were also displayed during training and consultative workshops conducted under the SUFAL shark and ray assignment.

Table 1. Dates and locations of exhibitions with visitor numbers.

Date	Venue	Number of visitors
17-18 April	Fish landing and wholesale fish market, Rupsha, Khulna	615
21 April	KB Ghat Fish Landing Site, Bagerhat	484
24 April	Fish landing and wholesale fish market, BFDC, Patharghata, Barguna	389
27-28 April	Fish landing and wholesale fish market, BFDC, Alipur, Kuakata	656
11-12 May	Fish landing and wholesale fish market, BFDC, Cox's Bazar	1259
15-16 May	New fishery ghat, Chattogram	724
Total number of visitors in the six exhibitions		4,127

Flyers were distributed in advance of the event to invite fishers and traders from nearby fish markets and landing sites, wildlife activist groups, students, community members, and government officials (Figure 5). Posters on protected sharks and rays of Bangladesh were distributed during visits to the local fisheries, forest, and other law enforcement and trader's association offices for display in the publicly accessible areas (Figure 5).

Through a series of questions asked to 100 visitors before and after the event, WCS evaluated the effectiveness of the Ocean Guardians exhibitions based on changes in visitor knowledge. Additionally, we solicited their feedback on the exhibits that they liked and others they thought needed improvement (see details below on the impact assessment section).

সমুদ্রের অভিভাবক - বাংলাদেশে বিপন্ন প্রজাতির হাঙ্গর ও শাপলাপাতা জাতের মাছ রক্ষায় প্রতিজ্ঞাবদ্ধ

হাঙ্গর ও শাপলাপাতা মাছের ব্যবস্থাপনা এবং বাণিজ্য সম্পর্কিত আইনকানুন সম্পর্কে জনসাধারণের সচেতনতা বৃদ্ধি করতে একটি কার্যকরী প্রদর্শনী।

বিপন্ন প্রজাতির হাঙ্গর ও শাপলাপাতা মাছের সিলভার ফ্রন্ট বন্ডার এবং বর্তমানে সিলভার ফ্রন্ট সেই এডেন প্রজাতির টেরনাই কমন্সে নিশ্চিত করতে ২০২১ সালের সেপ্টেম্বর মাসে বন্যপ্রাণী (সংরক্ষণ ও নিরাপত্তা) আইন ২০১২-এর অধীনে রক্ষিত হাঙ্গর ও শাপলাপাতা জাতের মাছের তালিকাটি সংশোধন করা হয়। এই ইন্টারন্যাশনাল কনজারভেশন সোসাইটি (ডাব্লিউসিএস) বাংলাদেশ বন্য প্রাণীর সুফল (SUFAL) প্রকল্পের অধীনে নতুন আইন সম্পর্কে জনগণকে জানাতে ও সচেতন করতে একটি বসন্তেতনতামূলক প্রচারণা চালাচ্ছে।

১৭ এপ্রিল থেকে ১৬ মে ২০২২ পর্যন্ত, একটি স্বাভাবিক সফল বসন্তের হাঙ্গর ও শাপলাপাতা মাছের সিলভার ফ্রন্ট, হাঙ্গর, হুমকিসমূহ এবং বন্য ও শাবলিকা সম্পর্কিত আইন ও নিয়মকানুন সম্পর্কে পায়েদোনাটা বাজারে উপস্থিত অঞ্চল জুড়ে কার্যকরী এবং শিক্ষামূলক প্রদর্শনী আয়োজন করা হবে। বসন্তের জিও-ও গবেষণামূলক বৈদ্যিক লক্ষণের সঠিক আশ্রয়ের মাধ্যমে প্রশিক্ষিত উপস্থাপক প্রদর্শনীটি শুরু করেছে। এর মাধ্যমে লক্ষ্যকৃত সমুদ্রের অভিভাবক হাঙ্গর ও টেরনাই মধ্য বসন্তের লক্ষণের সঠিকভাবে জানতে সুস্থ সারার ও সুস্থ জীবন নির্ভর করতে সহায়তা হবে।

প্রদর্শনীটি ময়মন ১৩ থেকে বিকাল ৫টা পর্যন্ত বিনামূল্যে ময়মন জন্ম উদ্ভূত থাকবে।

তারিখ	প্রদর্শনী স্থান
১৭-১৮ এপ্রিল	মধ্য অবতরণকেন্দ্র, বিএফভিসি, খুলনা
২১ এপ্রিল	কেবি ফাট মধ্য অবতরণকেন্দ্র, বাগেরহাট
২৪ এপ্রিল	মধ্য অবতরণকেন্দ্র, বিএফভিসি, পাথরঘাটা, বরগুনা
২৭-২৮ এপ্রিল	মধ্য অবতরণকেন্দ্র, বিএফভিসি, আলিপুর, কুমিল্লা
১১-১২ মে	মধ্য অবতরণকেন্দ্র, বিএফভিসি, কক্সবাজার
১৫-১৬ মে	নতুন মধ্য অবতরণকেন্দ্র, চট্টগ্রাম

খুলনা
বাগেরহাট
পাথরঘাটা
কুমিল্লা
চট্টগ্রাম
কক্সবাজার

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY



Figure 5. To encourage local fish traders, fishers, and law enforcement officers to attend the Ocean Guardians exhibition, flyers and posters were distributed at the nearby fish markets, landing sites, and government offices (top). To help the field level officers to distinguish protected shark and ray species, WCS distributed posters that are richly illustrated with easily recognizable characteristics (bottom).

Exhibition at Rupsha Fish Landing and Wholesale Fish Market in Khulna

The first exhibition was held on April 17 and 18, 2022, at the fish landing and wholesale fish market in Rupsha. The fish market association kindly allocated the space and helped organize the exhibition.

The president and the secretary of the Rupsha Fish Market Association along with other traders visited the exhibition and received a guided tour (Figure 6). They expressed their gratitude for convening the fun and interactive exhibition that educated them about the difference between sharks and rays that can be caught or traded and those that must be safely released. Later, both the president and secretary expressed their support, saying that they would encourage fishers and traders to follow the new regulations, and that they would place the posters in their offices so that others may learn.

Among the visitors, a shark and ray trader stated that he learned through the exhibition that possessing a sawfish rostrum is illegal and he will obtain permission from the BFD for keeping a sawfish rostrum in his possession. He also told us that industrial fishing vessels are the primary supplier to local shark and ray processing centers before body parts are transported to Chattogram, where the highest value parts are exported internationally by sea. He further explained that the shark and ray trade is lucrative, but since it is a side business, he would like to focus on his regular fish business.

Nirmal Kumar Paul, BFD's Deputy Conservator of Forests, visited the exhibition and praised our initiative to convene it at the fish landing site (Figure 6). He also stated that fishers and traders previously believed that all sharks and rays were protected, but that this exhibition, supported by outreach tools developed under the SUFAL assignment, will help them to distinguish among protected, regulated, and non-protected species.



Figure 6. Nirmal Kumar Paul, Deputy Conservator of Forests, as well as the president and secretary of the fish market association of Rupsha fish landing site, were given a guided tour of the exhibition by the coordinator of WCS's educational outreach program and the senior manager of the marine conservation program respectively. They also discussed taking a collaborative approach for combating the illegal trade in shark and ray in Khulna and the effective implementation of government regulations.

Exhibition at KB Ghat Fish Landing Site in Bagerhat

The second exhibition was conducted on April 21, 2022, at the KB Ghat Fish Landing Site in Bagerhat, receiving a total of 484 visitors, with most fishers and fish traders. While distributing the flyers for inviting the fishers and traders during a busy morning at the landing site/market, we found no sharks or rays. The traders, however, claimed that sharks and rays sometimes enter Bangladesh via the Indian border during March and April. One of the traders at this landing site was previously arrested and imprisoned for selling leopard whiprays (*Himantura leoparda*) packaged with frozen fish. After learning from the WCS staff that not all sharks and rays are protected, the traders were encouraged to visit the exhibition to learn about protected and non-protected species.

The president and secretary of the fish traders' association of Bagerhat attended the guided tour and, like the feedback we received in Rupsa, expressed their appreciation for the program and receiving the posters. They stated that the easy-to-use guidance in the posters using symbols that resemble key features of protected sharks and rays (e.g., hammer for hammerhead sharks) will help them to communicate fishing rules to fishers and trade regulations to traders. Field officers from the Forest Department and Department of Fisheries also visited exhibition to learn about sharks and rays in Bangladesh (Figure 7).



Figure 7. To improve their ability to recognize protected sharks and rays from their carcasses and body parts, the WCS field coordinator led BFD field level officers on a guided tour.

Exhibition at BFDC Fish Landing and Wholesale Fish Market in Patharghata

On April 24, 2022, we convened an exhibition at the Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation (BFDC) fish landing and wholesale fish market in Patharghata, receiving 389 visitors. While distributing flyers to promote the exhibition among fishers and traders, the exhibition team found a local trader selling two globally Endangered honeycomb whiprays *Himantura undulata* and a Bleeker's whiplay *Pateobatis bleekeri*. GM Masum Billah, our field coordinator and exhibition team member, used the opportunity to explain to the trader about the Wildlife Act Schedule I and II listed species, as well as how to recognize them using a poster that features a simple illustration of the protected species. On the same day, the Coast Guard confiscated 60 kg of sharks, including protected scalloped hammerhead, pigeye, and bull sharks, as well as non-protected spadenose and milk sharks, and 10 kg of protected

butterfly rays and non-protected Bengal whips, transferring them to a BFD range officer, who fined the trader BDT 3,000.

During the exhibition, we took the opportunity to visit Coast Guard and BFD offices and explain to them how to distinguish between protected, regulated, and non-protected sharks and rays. We also invited them to the exhibition and provided each office with copies of the identification posters (Figure 8). The secretary of the Barguna District Fishing Trawler Labor Association visited the exhibition, and we gave him posters for their office. The BFDC manager and marketing officer also visited the exhibition along with their families who were overjoyed to learn about the biology and ecology of sharks and rays. They stated that small traders typically purchase small-sized butterfly rays and whiprays for sale in local markets, whereas wholesale traders purchase, process, and transport large shark and rays before sending them to Chattogram and Dhaka. They claimed that the exhibition was important for all coastal fishers and traders, and they promised to keep an eye on the landing site to prevent the illegal trade in sharks and rays.



Figure 8. Forest officials learning about the important shark and ray habitats and about the fishing gear restrictions.

Exhibition at BFDC Fish Landing and Wholesale Fish Market in Alipur

On April 27 and 28, 2022, we convened an exhibition at the BFDC fish landing and wholesale fish market, in Alipur, Kuakata, receiving 656 visitors. Several non-protected spadenose sharks and Bengal whiprays, as well as three protected guitarfish and one bull shark were found while distributing flyers in fish landing sites. Six local field-level officers from the BFD visited the exhibition along with 20 members of the Animal Lovers of Patuakhali Club visited our exhibition. They were astounded to learn about the amazing diversity of sharks and rays in Bangladesh and the critical role they play in maintaining a healthy ocean and a healthy people (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Visitors learning about the biology of sharks and rays and their senses in an interactive way.

Exhibition at BFDC Fish Landing and Wholesale Fish Market in Cox's Bazar

On May 11 and 12, 2022, we convened an exhibition at the BFDC fish landing and wholesale fish market in Cox's Bazar receiving 1,259 visitors. While they were distributing flyers to promote the exhibition at the landing site, the team found protected scalloped hammerhead sharks, sharpnose guitarfish, and bull sharks as well as non-protected spadenose sharks, Bengal whipsnakes, and milk sharks. They gave the traders practical instructions on how to distinguish between protected and non-protected species.

Twelve officers from the BFD along with the Cox's Bazar's Senior Upazila Fisheries Officer and his team attended the exhibition. More than 40 shark and ray traders and women working at the fish landing site also participated in the exhibition and expressed their appreciation for helping them understand the ecological significance and identifying protected species of sharks and rays (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Women working at the fish landing site are informed that it is a misconception that eating shark or ray meat can cure cancer (left) and officers of Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation in Cox's Bazar received instruction from the WCS field coordinator on identifying protected species (right).

Exhibition at New Fish Landing Site in Chattogram

On May 15 and 16, 2022, we convened an exhibition at the New fishery ghat in Chattogram, receiving 724 visitors (Figure 11). According to several traders, about 1,000 kg of sharks and rays caught in trawling nets were landed at the New fisheries ghat on the same day we set up

the venue. According to the BFD officers that visited the exhibition, the New fishery ghat is a major hub for the shark and ray trade and the exhibition and outreach materials will strengthen the ability of BFD officers to identify protected species. They also underlined the need to continue educating fishers and fish traders so that they are fully aware of the amendment to the Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, 2012 revising the list of protected sharks and rays.



Figure 11. Visitors learned about the biology of sharks and rays including the senses they use to live in the water.

WCS displayed the exhibition materials during the workshop to validate Non-Detriment Findings (NDFs) for priority CITES Appendix II listed sharks and rays held at the Hoimonti Center of the Bangladesh Forest Department on February 17, 2022. A shorter version of the exhibition was also displayed during the 3rd national consultation on the *National Conservation Strategy and Plan of Action for Sharks and Rays in Bangladesh and CITES Non-detriment Findings (NDFs)* held at the Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden on June 19, 2022 with 42 senior government officials from the MoEFCC, MoFL, BFD, DoF, BFRI, BFDC, Ministry of Commerce (MoC), National Board of Revenue (NBR), and representatives from the Coast Guard, Navy, and Police.



Figure 12. WCS displayed exhibits and engaged participants during different workshops and consultations. WCS senior manager of the marine conservation program provided a guided tour to the Honorable Minister, Md. Shahab Uddin, M.P., MoEFCC, Iqbal Abdullah Harun, Additional Secretary (Admin), MoEFCC, Dr. Farhina Ahmed, Secretary, MoEFCC, and Md. Amir Hosain Chowdhury, Chief Conservator of Forests, BFD during the 3rd national consultation at the Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden.

4. Impact assessment of the Ocean Guardians exhibitions

Based on the changes in answers to nine questions asked to 46 fish traders, 28 fishers, 13 landing site labors, 5 BFD staff, 4 students, one DoF staff, one journalist, and two other community members before and after the guided tour to the exhibition, WCS assessed the effectiveness of the Ocean Guardians exhibitions.

The questions addressed key topics, with multiple choice or true/false options provided on a printed questionnaire in Bangla (Appendix 2):

- Q1. What are sharks and rays?
- Q2. Why do sharks and rays need better protection?
- Q3. Why are sharks and rays important?
- Q4. Under which law are sharks and rays protected in Bangladesh?
- Q5. Who must follow this law?
- Q6. Are all the sharks and rays protected by law in Bangladesh?
- Q7. Which Government department issues the permit you need for landing and trading, regulated sharks and rays?
- Q8. Which object matches which strictly protected species group?
- Q9. What steps make releasing a shark at sea safe for the animal and people?

Results show that participants started out with a moderate level of knowledge, scoring 42% in the pre-exhibition assessment increasing to 87% after attending the exhibition (Figure 13).

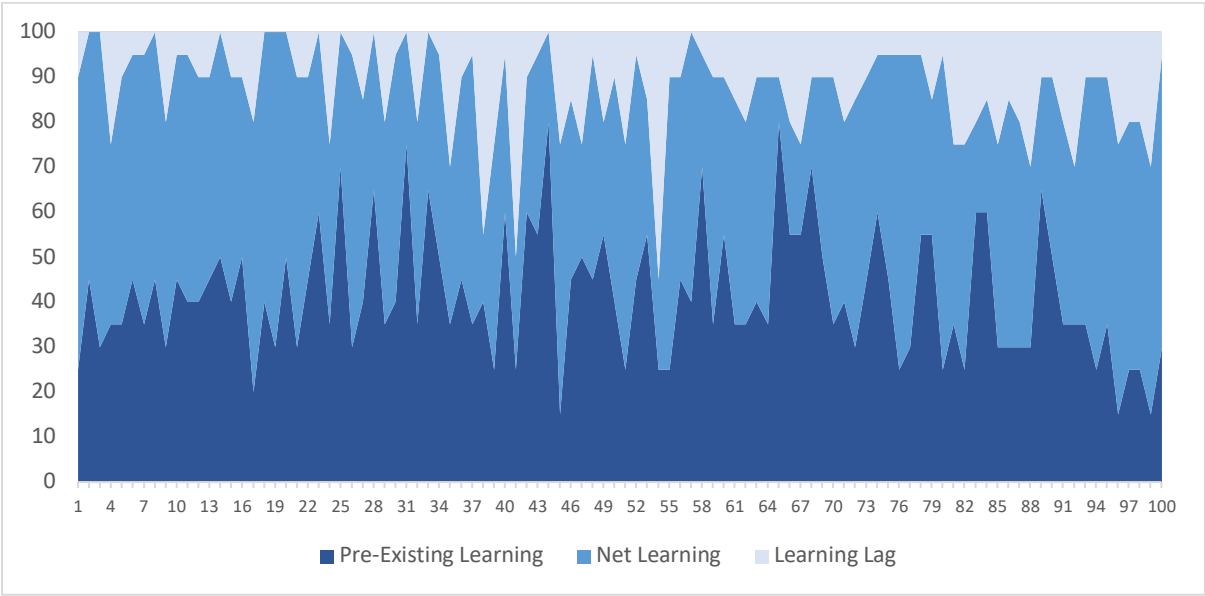


Figure 13. One hundred pre- and post-exhibition interviews indicate that the exhibition significantly increased the knowledge of attendees about role of sharks and rays in maintaining a healthy ocean, recognizing protected species, and safe release procedures with the x axis representing the interview respondents and the y-axis indicating the percentage of questions that were correctly answered.

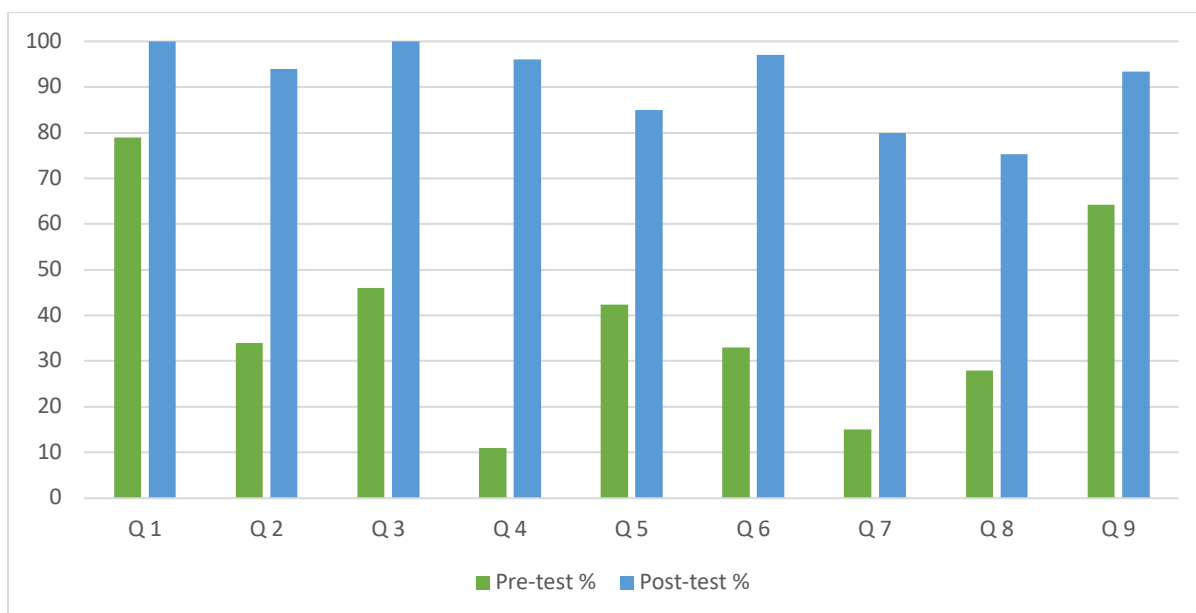


Figure 14. Knowledge levels of exhibition participants assessed before (green) and after (blue) the guided tour of the exhibitions show an overall positive change of 45%.

The greatest improvement (85%) was achieved in knowledge about the legal protection of threatened sharks and rays under the Wildlife Act (Q4). More than half of the attendees (58%) were unaware of who is required to follow these rules with the percentage decreasing to 15% after attending the exhibition (Q5). Only about 15% of the visitors were aware that BFD issues the permits required for landing and trading protected sharks and rays with the percentage increasing to 80% after the exhibition (Q7).

Before the exhibition only a third of the visitors (34%) knew why threatened sharks and rays need protection, which increased to 94% after the exhibition (Q3). Only 46% of visitors knew about the importance of sharks and rays in maintaining the natural balance in our oceans before the exhibition which increased to 100% after the exhibition (Q2).

Before the exhibition, only one third of the visitors (33%) were aware that not all the sharks and rays are prohibited to catch which increased to 97% after the exhibition (Q6). Before the exhibition, only 28% of the participants were able to match shark and ray species and species groups regulated under CITES with common tools representing their characteristics, which increased to 75% after the exhibitions. Almost two-thirds of the visitors (64%) knew about guidelines for safely releasing protected sharks and rays before the exhibition, which increased to 93% after the exhibition (Figure 14).

This impact assessment indicates that the publicly accessible interactive exhibitions can play a significant role in bringing positive changes in the knowledge of fishers, fish traders, law enforcement officers, their capacity of identifying protected sharks and rays and safely releasing them. However, there are still opportunities for improvement in communicating who should follow the rules, who to approach for getting permission to trade in regulated species and on identifying protected species.

5. Educational outreach and communication tools

A variety of printed materials, including a pocket-sized identification guide, posters, a water-resistant brochure, a leaflet, and a booklet, were produced by WCS to introduce protected sharks and rays in Bangladesh. Additionally, WCS is producing a 12-minute short animation film for sharing on social media and showing at educational outreach events and trainings.

Sharks and Rays of Bangladesh – A guide to identifying protected species and their commonly traded parts



Figure 15. To help government officers, fishers, and traders to identify protected sharks and rays from whole carcasses and their body parts, WCS produced a richly illustrated identification guide.

WCS is producing a pocket-size identification guide on sharks and rays in Bengali language to enable law enforcement officers, fishers, shark and ray traders, and citizen scientists to identify protected sharks and rays and their commonly traded parts. This guide describes and illustrates diagnostic features for the visual identification of sharks and rays and their commonly traded parts protected under the Bangladesh Wildlife Act, 2012, and regulated by CITES for trade across international borders. An overview of laws and rules regarding sharks and rays and instructions for the safe release of protected species is also provided (Figure 15).

Poster on Protected Sharks and Rays of Bangladesh

WCS produced a poster on the sharks and rays protected under the Schedule I and II of Wildlife (Conservation & Security) Act, 2012, illustrating the key characteristics for each species or species group (Figure 16). A leaflet version of this poster was also developed for wider dissemination during educational outreach events.

Considering the low literacy levels in coastal fishing communities and the limited capacity of law enforcement officers to identify different species of sharks or rays, we used common tools to represent protected species, such as a saw for sawfishes, a hammer for hammerhead sharks, and a sickle for thresher sharks. More than 750 copies of these posters were disseminated to forest, fisheries, and law enforcement officers, traders, and fishers.

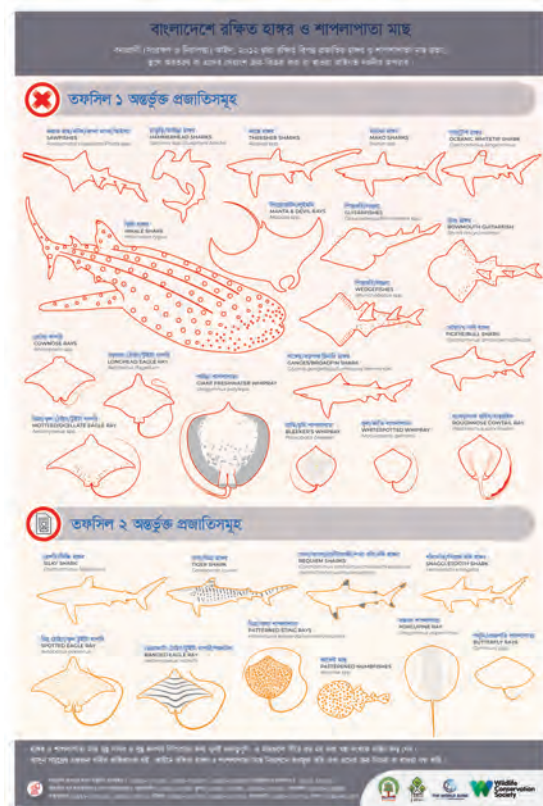


Figure 16. Illustrated characteristic features of sharks and rays and tools that resemble these features are used to identify protected species from carcasses and their body parts in posters and leaflets, which were highly appreciated by the fishers, traders, and government officers during the exhibitions.

Brochure on Protected Sharks and Rays of Bangladesh

WCS also developed and produced a richly illustrated water-proof brochure for commonly traded sharks and rays of Bangladesh in both the English and Bangla languages. This brochure will enable the fishers, traders, and government officers to recognize protected and non-protected species that are commonly landed and traded. The brochure contains short descriptions about the physical characteristics, biology, ecology and habitat preferences of each species, fun facts, and safe release guidelines (Figure 17).

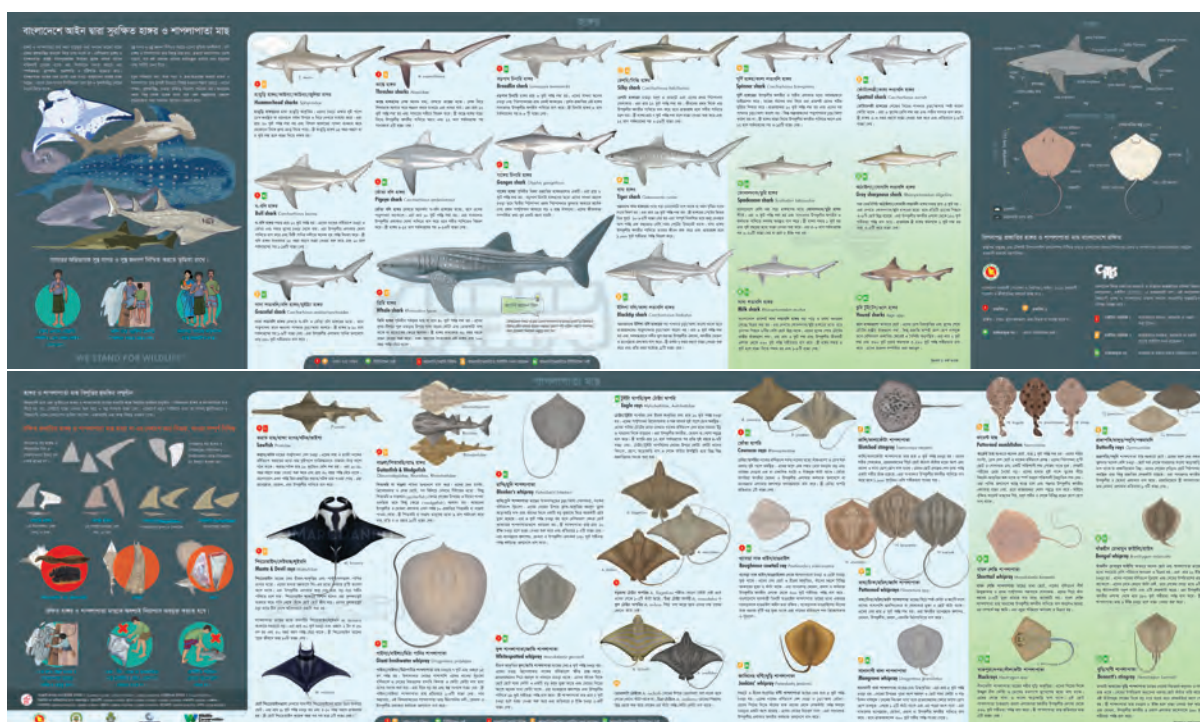


Figure 17. Water-proof brochure for fishers, traders, and government officers produced under the SUFAL assignment and disseminated during outreach activities.

Booklet on Amazing Aquatic Animals of Bangladesh

Under the SUFAL assignment, WCS reprinted the booklet *Amazing Aquatic Animals* in Bangla language (Figure 18). This book consisted of simple drawings and short texts that introduce threatened marine wildlife species of Bangladesh to improve awareness about and compliance with national wildlife and international trade regulations.



Figure 18. The booklet *Amazing Aquatic Animals of Bangladesh* depicts the astounding diversity of aquatic animals including sharks, rays, cetaceans, and marine turtles.

Short Animation Film

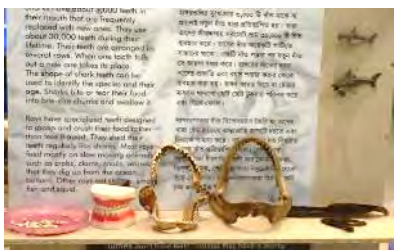
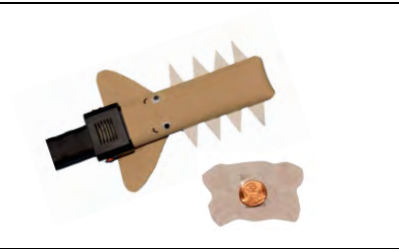
WCS is developing a short 12-minute documentary film to empower fisherfolk, fish traders and law enforcement officers to recognize protected shark and ray species, understand the critical role they play in maintaining a healthy marine ecosystem and sustaining fisheries, and how to safely release them when found alive in their fishing gears. Upon completion and approval from SUFAL, this short film is intended for showing during outreach events and via social media channels. The structure also enables individual sections to be shown in educational outreach and training programs.

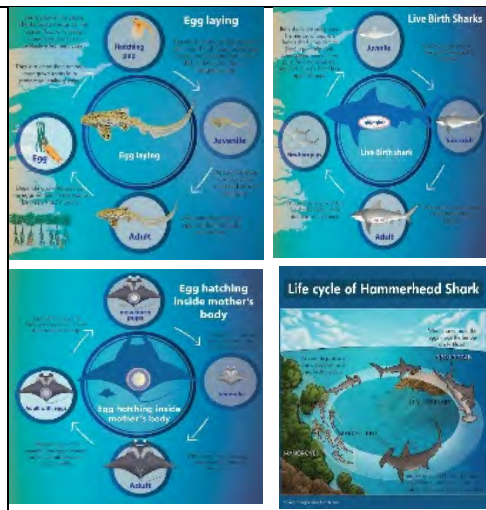
Appendix 1. Communication strategy for the *Ocean Guardians: Protecting Threatened Sharks and Rays in Bangladesh* initiative.

Key Message 1. Sharks and rays play a critical role in maintaining a healthy marine ecosystem that sustains fisheries and fishing livelihoods [Healthy Ocean – Healthy People].

Title	Exhibit type and Content	Instructions	Illustration
Sharks and rays are a different kind of fish.	Panel - Introduces shark and rays as a special kind of fish that have soft skeletons made of cartilage and explains about their uncovered gill slits, stiff fins, and their reproduction similarity to humans and other mammals in being slow growing and having few young.	Image of a shark and ray and fish used to highlight uncovered vs covered gills and stiff vs expanded fins, and sharks and rays that occur in low numbers vs fish that have many young.	
Sharks and rays are different from other marine wildlife.	Game - Includes a basket filled with cut-out shapes of different animals.	Facilitator explains the characteristics, participants choose animals that do not match sharks and rays, ending up with only sharks and rays in the basket.	[Add image]
Can you tell the difference?	Game - Communicates differences among bony fish, elasmobranchs, and cetaceans based on their unique and shared features using laminated cards. Some characteristics apply to all (spend entire life in water), others are shared by two groups (cannot fold fins, no scales, grow slowly, have few babies, give live birth, or gets oxygen through gills, moves tail side to side), and others only to one group (breathes air, mother feeds baby milk, moves tail up and down).	Laminated cards with bony fish, dolphins, sharks, and rays to be placed in the correct section of the Venn-diagram.	

Shark and ray families in Bangladesh	Panel - Presents the most important characteristics used to identify shark and ray families and genera occurring in Bangladesh.	Visitors are provided with an overview of shark and ray families and genera occurring in Bangladesh and can recognize them by their body shape/appearance.	
Strong swimmers and powerful predators	Game - Presents body parts of sharks and rays with explanations on how fins on the back and sides help sharks turn and remain stable, how their tail fin propels them forward, and how ray fins are fused to their head; information on their strong jaws and feeding habits; their powerful senses making them top predator; and differentiating male/female specimens,	Visitors learn to identify shark and ray body parts and connect their names with their functions. When they connect the correct body part and description, a light indicates a successful match.	

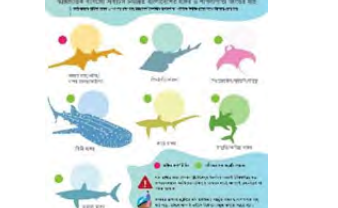
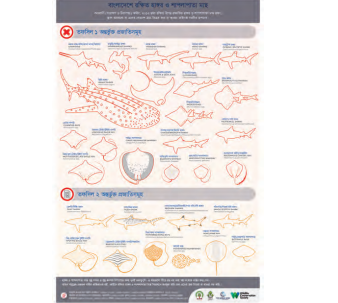
Sensational sharks and rays	Discovery Tower - Visually enhanced panels and models present information on: <i>Protective armor</i> - Bodies of sharks and rays are covered with tiny, pointy tooth-like scales which feel similar to sandpaper when rubbed in the opposite direction. The scales reduce friction in the water to help these fish swim fast. They also provide a tough outer skin that protects them against predators. <i>Feeding</i> - Sharks have about 3,000 teeth in their mouth and loose around 30,000 teeth in their lifetime. Their teeth are arranged in several rows, so that when a tooth falls out a new one moves in. Sharks bite or tear their food into bite-size chunks and swallow it. The shape of shark teeth and their jaws can be used to determine the species and their age. <i>Special senses</i> - Sharks sense pressure changes (e.g., muscle contractions of prey or predators) by a line of pores and sensory cells that runs along the length of their body and electro-sensors on their head and snout. Electro-sensors are the only way for rays to detect prey under their bodies since their eyes are on the other side. There is no human equivalent of this sense.	Visitors encouraged to use their own senses to learn about special features and senses of sharks and rays by touching different body parts.	  
Sharks and rays have super senses	Game - A metal detector disguised as a sawfish rostrum demonstrates how electro-sensors allow sharks and rays to detect their prey (represented by cut-out images pasted on coins) on the sea bottom or even buried under the sand.	Visitors move a sawfish rostrum over a cloth to detect hidden prey under it.	

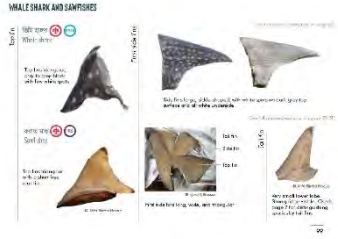
Circle of Life	Game – Presents lifecycles and habitat preferences of sharks and rays as a puzzle, explaining that some species/species groups give birth to live young (e.g., hammerhead and whale sharks) while others produce young in eggs that hatch inside the mother's body (e.g., tiger sharks) or deposit eggs on the ocean floor or among mangrove roots in protective leathery egg cases (e.g., zebra sharks). Also shows that areas where sharks or rays give birth and spend time as young, called nursery grounds, include the Sundarbans, other mangrove patches, and adjacent nearshore waters, as well as the shallow areas in the Meghna estuary.	Visitors learn about different reproduction methods of sharks and rays, nursery grounds, and the importance of protecting priority habitat for sharks and rays, by fitting puzzle pieces into the gameboards.	 The top row shows 'Egg laying' and 'Live Birth Sharks'. The bottom row shows 'Egg hatching inside mother's body' and 'Life cycle of Hammerhead Shark'.
Ecological importance of sharks and rays	Panel – Shows sharks and rays as ancient animals that inhabited the earth before the dinosaurs and survived multiple mass extinctions, but with many on the verge of extinction. Panel – Shows marine food web and trophic levels explaining the role of sharks and rays and their ecological importance for maintaining a healthy ocean and healthy people.	Visitors learn about the role of sharks and rays in maintaining a healthy ocean and healthy people, e.g., by maintaining an ecosystem balance and helping to prevent fishery collapse.	 The diagram shows a timeline from 1000000000 years ago to the present, highlighting the presence of various marine species including sharks, rays, and dinosaurs.
Where are the sharks and rays?	Map – Shows key shark and ray habitats and Marine Protected Areas established to protect them.	Visitors are shown the important shark and ray habitats and efforts to protect them.	 The map shows the coastline of Bangladesh with various habitats and protected areas marked.

Key Message 2. Two thirds of all shark and ray species known or suspected to occur in Bangladesh are threatened with extinction because they grow and reproduce slowly and too many are killed.

Title	Exhibit type and Content	Instructions	Illustration
Sharks and rays are ecologically vulnerable.	Panel – Infograph visualizes the longevity, slow growth, and reproduction of sharks, rays, dolphins, whales and marine turtles (called ocean giants) making them ecologically vulnerable.	Visitors learn that most ocean giants are vulnerable to overfishing because they grow slowly, have few young, and take a long time to replenish.	
Sharks and rays are threatened by overfishing.	Panel – Detail declines in fish catches and shark and ray landings and explain the negative impacts of bycatch.	Visitors learn about the fishing gears responsible for most shark and ray catches and the negative impacts of bycatch.	
What fishing gear is permitted?	Game – Shows permitted and illegal fishing gears in Bangladesh through gear samples attached to a large board with their legal status and impacts on marine wildlife provided under hinged flaps.	Visitors lift hinged flaps to learn about the legal status of fishing gears and their impacts on sharks, rays, and other marine wildlife.	
Illegal trade of sharks and rays	Panel and specimens – Shows how local demand and international trade in shark and ray parts threatened their survival. Exhibits include shark/ray fins, skins, and mobulid gillplates.	Visitors learn about the parts of sharks and rays commonly traded and how this demand threatens their survival in Bangladesh. Facilitators engage visitors in discussions about local use and debunking beliefs about their medicinal value.	

Key Message 3. Killing and trading threatened sharks and rays protected by the Bangladesh Wildlife Act without a permit is a punishable offence.

Title	Exhibit type and Content	Instructions	Illustration
Sharks and rays of Bangladesh regulated for international trade under CITES	Poster – Introduces species protected or regulated for international trade under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).	Visitors learn to recognize CITES regulated species by their characteristics representing common tools or instruments.	
Strictly Protected	Game – Showcases visual characteristics of strictly protected sharks and rays to be matched with cut-out shapes of common tools and instruments - saw for sawfishes, hammer for hammerheads, sickle for threshers, pliers for devil rays, paint brush for whale shark, guitar for guitarfishes and wedgefishes, and wrench for mako sharks	Visitors assign common tools to strictly protected shark and ray species/species groups, enabling them to visually distinguish species/species groups that are prohibited to landing and trade.	
Not all sharks and rays are equal	Poster/Game – Familiarizes visitors with shark and ray species/species groups that are protected by the Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, 2012. Laminated photographs of shark and ray specimens at landing, including protected and non-protected species, are sorted using their characteristics.	Visitors learn to differentiate shark and ray species/species groups protected under Schedule I and II of the Bangladesh Wildlife Act.	
Wheel of Fortune	Game – Testing visitors acquired knowledge of legally protected species in Bangladesh.	Visitors spin a wheel with commonly landed shark and ray species. They learn to correctly identify the species where the wheel stops with the help of the <i>Legally Protected Sharks and Rays of Bangladesh</i> poster.	

Commonly traded parts	Game – Informing visitors about legally permitted/prohibited/regulated trade in shark and ray parts by matching laminated photographs or specimens of fins and skins with shark/ray specimens (laminated photographs) using the identification tools (brochure, ID guide).	Visitors pair fins and skins with the shark/ray species to sensitize them about legally protected species and their commonly traded parts.	
Safe handling and release of protected sharks and rays	Panel, Demonstration, Video –Familiarize visitors with safe handling and release procedures to reduce mortalities of threatened sharks and rays. A short video explains procedures specifically for sawfish. Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQtEVLi_5nw	Facilitator engages visitors in demonstration on safe handling and release procedures using shark and ray models	
I am an Ocean Guardian	Photobooth – Visitors commit to comply with regulations protecting threatened sharks and rays.	A picture with the slogan 'I am an Ocean Guardian' invites visitors to take their photo and share it through their social media networks.	

Appendix 2. Impact assessment form for the Ocean Guardians exhibition.

সমুদ্রের অভিভাবক - বাংলাদেশে বিপন্ন প্রজাতির হাঙ্গর ও শাপলাপাতা জাতের মাছ রক্ষায় প্রতিজ্ঞাবদ্ধ

আমাদের প্রদর্শনীতে আসার জন্য আপনাকে ধন্যবাদ। আমরা আমাদের শিক্ষামূলক প্রদর্শনী কার্যক্রমের উদ্যোগকে উন্নত করার লক্ষ্যে এই প্রদর্শনী মূল্যায়ন ফর্ম পূরণের মাধ্যমে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য ধন্যবাদ জানাচ্ছি।

এই প্রশ্নপত্রের উত্তর দেওয়ার মাধ্যমে, আপনি আমাদের সমুদ্রের অভিভাবক হিসেবে জনগণকে অনুপ্রাণিত করার উদ্যোগের কার্যকারিতা মূল্যায়ন করতে আপনার মূল্যবান মতামত প্রদান করছেন। আপনার পরিচয় কোনোভাবেই মূল্যায়ন ফলাফলের সাথে যুক্ত নয়।

বয়স:

পেশা:

অনুগ্রহ করে নিচের প্রশ্নগুলো পড়ুন এবং সঠিক উত্তরে টিক দিন। একাধিক উত্তর প্রযোজ্য হলে সেক্ষেত্রে প্রশ্নে নির্দেশনা দেওয়া আছে।

১. হাঙ্গর ও শাপলাপাতা কোন ধরনের প্রাণী?

☐ স্তন্যপায়ী প্রাণী

☐ পাখি

☐ সরীসৃপ

☐ মাছ

২. কেনো হাঙ্গর ও শাপলাপাতা মাছ রক্ষা করা বা এদের ব্যবস্থাপনা প্রয়োজন?

☐ এরা খুবই বিপদজনক।

☐ অত্যধিক সংখ্যক ধরা বা হত্যা করা হচ্ছে।

☐ এরা সমুদ্রে জাহাজ নিঃসৃত তেলের ক্ষতিকর প্রভাব কমায়।

৩. কেনো হাঙ্গর ও শাপলাপাতা মাছ গুরুত্বপূর্ণ?

☐ এরা পানি দূষণ রোধ করে।

☐ এরা সমুদ্রের ভারসাম্য বজায় রেখে আমাদের সমুদ্রকে সুস্থ রাখে।

☐ এরা মানুষকে পানিতে ডুবে যাওয়া থেকে রক্ষা করে।

৪. কোন আইনের অধীনে বাংলাদেশে হাঙ্গর ও শাপলাপাতা মাছ রক্ষিত?

☐ সামুদ্রিক মৎস্য আইন, ২০২০

☐ বন্যপ্রাণী (সংরক্ষণ ও নিরাপত্তা) আইন, ২০১২

☐ মাছের সুরক্ষা এবং সংরক্ষণের নিয়ম, ১৯৮৫

☐ সামুদ্রিক মৎস্য অধ্যাদেশ, ১৯৮৩

৫. এই আইন কারা অনুসরণ করবে? একাধিক উত্তর থাকতে পারে।

☐ বিদেশি মাছ ধরার নৌকার মাঝি এবং কর্মী যারা

☐ যারা হাঙ্গর ও শাপলাপাতা মাছ খায় (ভোক্তা)

বাংলাদেশে প্রবেশ করছে

☐ যারা তাদের জীবিকা, খাদ্য অথবা আনন্দের জন্য মাছ

☐ যারা হাঙ্গর ও শাপলাপাতা মাছ ক্রয় ও বিক্রয় করে

ধরে (মৎস্যজীবী)

(মৎস্য ব্যবসায়ী)

☐ বাংলাদেশের প্রতিটি নাগরিক

৬. বাংলাদেশের সব হাঙ্গর ও শাপলাপাতা মাছ কি আইন দ্বারা রক্ষিত?

☐ হ্যাঁ

☐ না

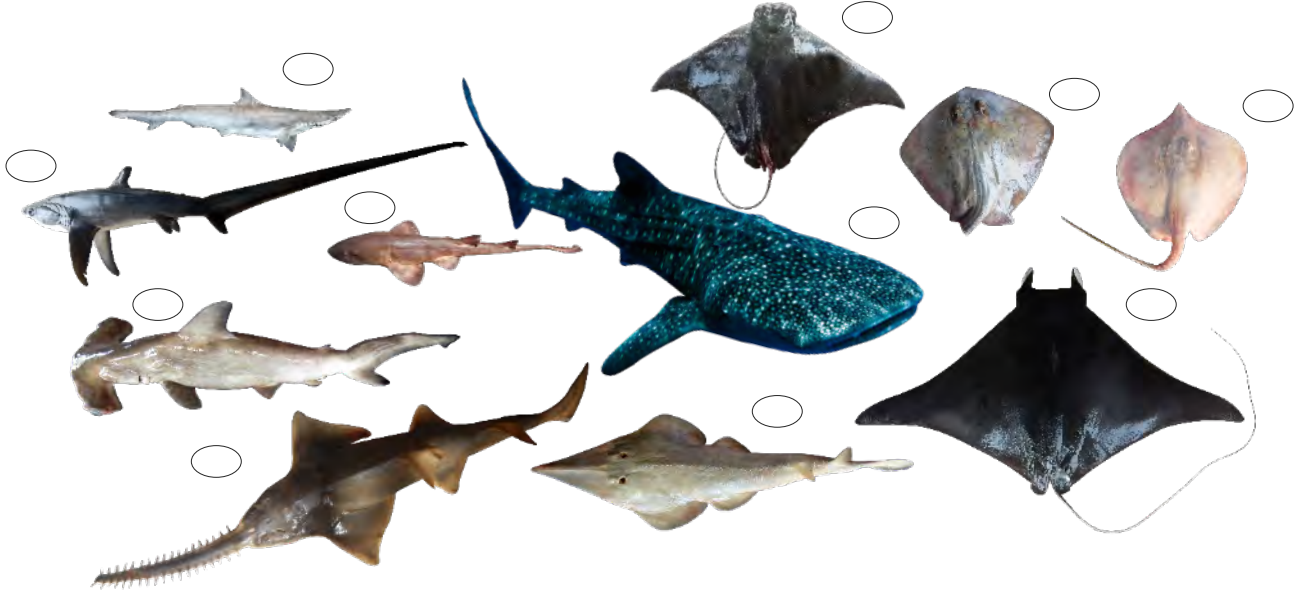
৭. কোন সরকারী বিভাগ আপনার অবতরণ এবং ব্যবসা, নিয়ন্ত্রিত হাঙ্গর ও শাপলাপাতা মাছের বাণিজ্যের অনুমতি প্রদান করে?

☐ মৎস্য অধিদপ্তর (DoF)

☐ পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর (DoE)

☐ বাংলাদেশ বন অধিদপ্তর (BFD)

৮. বাংলাদেশ আইন দ্বারা কঠোরভাবে রক্ষিত হাঙ্গর ও শাপলাপাতা মাছ দৈনিক ব্যবহার্য যন্ত্রপাতির সাথে মিলিয়ে সহজে চিহ্নিত করা সম্ভব।
নীচে শুধুমাত্র কঠোরভাবে রক্ষিত প্রজাতিতে টিক দিন।



৯. রক্ষিত হাঙ্গর ও শাপলাপাতা মাছ সমুদ্রে ছেড়ে দিতে হবে। সঠিক পদ্ধতিতে সমুদ্রে অবমুক্ত করা হলে এদের বেশিরভাগেরই বেঁচে থাকার ভালো সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে। নিজে এবং প্রাণীকে আঘাতমুক্ত রাখতে এবং প্রাণীর ধকল কমাতে সঠিক অবতরণ পদ্ধতি অবলম্বন খুবই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। নিরাপদে অবমুক্ত করার ক্ষেত্রে নিচের কোনটি সত্য বা মিথ্যা তা নির্দেশ করুন।

যত দ্রুত সম্ভব রক্ষিত হাঙ্গর ও শাপলাপাতা মাছ পানিতে থাকা অবস্থায় সমুদ্রে ছেড়ে দেওয়া	☐ সত্য ☐ মিথ্যা
সমুদ্রে ছেড়ে দেওয়ার পূর্বে অবশ্যই এদের শরীর থেকে সমস্ত জাল বা আটকে থাকা সুতা ছাড়িয়ে বা বড়শি খুলে ফেলা	☐ সত্য ☐ মিথ্যা
মাথা পানির দিকে রেখে প্রাণীটিকে সমুদ্রে ছাড়া	☐ সত্য ☐ মিথ্যা
ভালো করে ধরার জন্য তাদের ফুলকাছিদ্র বা শিং ধরে টানা	☐ সত্য ☐ মিথ্যা
নৌকায় উঠানোর জন্য লোহার হুক ব্যবহার করা	☐ সত্য ☐ মিথ্যা

১০. প্রদর্শনীর কোন বিষয়টি আপনি সবচেয়ে বেশি উপভোগ করেছেন?

১১. প্রদর্শনীর কোন বিষয়টি আপনি উপভোগ করেননি?