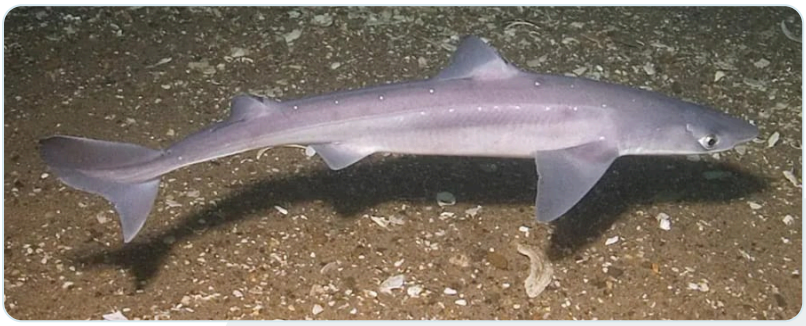
SHARKS AND DOGFISH

Spurdog

Squalus acanthias

Caught off the Sussex coast | Confirmed record



Spurdog (*Squalus acanthias*). Picture: Doug Costa, NOAA/SBNMS, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Squalus_acanthias_stellwagen.jpg.

IN SHORT

The spurdog is a slim grey shark with a sharp spine in front of each dorsal fin and, when young, white spots along its flanks. The British boat record spurdog came from Hastings, Sussex, in 2017. British boat record: confirmed.

Key facts

IDENTIFY IT
Slim grey shark with a sharp spine in front of each dorsal fin and white spots when young. No anal fin.

SIZE
Up to about 25 lb; shore catches typically 5 to 10 lb.

HABITAT
Usually deep water, moving shallower to feed. Hunts near the seabed and in midwater for herring, sprats and sandeels. More common in the west and north.

OFF SUSSEX
Recorded off Sussex; no months in our sources

AROUND BRITAIN
Midwater feeding is especially common in summer; mating is in winter. No catch months given.

METHODS
Hooks 2/0 to 4/0 on heavy 80 lb mono or wire. Baits: mackerel strip, herring, sandeel, squid. Mind the spines when landing.

GROUP
Sharks and dogfish

COME FISHING WITH US

Fish with Kestrel Warrior from Brighton Marina

Where you might meet spurdog with Captain Ant:

- **Spurdog over the Sussex wrecks** (a 10-hour day at anchor over wrecks; 10 hours, £110 per person or £800 whole boat)

Free tuition and free gutting and filleting of your catch. Rod hire £10 per person; fishing tackle is included on the shark trip. Prices 2027 from £20 per person: kestrelwarrior6.co.uk/charter-boat-fishing-prices/

Book: ring **07896 471691** (8am to 9pm, seven days a week) · info@kestrelwarrior6.co.uk · kestrelwarrior6.co.uk/contact/

Scan to book

About the spurdog

The spurdog is a slim grey shark with a sharp spine in front of each dorsal fin and, when young, white spots along its flanks. It has no anal fin. It usually lives in deep water and moves shallower to feed, hunting near the seabed and in midwater for herring, sprats and sandeels. It is more common in the west and north of Britain than along the south coast. Anglers can expect a fish of up to about 25 lb, and shore catches are typically 5 to 10 lb. Midwater feeding is especially common in summer, while mating takes place in winter. On a boat trip you handle a spurdog with respect. Those spines are real, so landing one calls for care and a steady hand. It is also a fish with a worrying story. It is listed as Vulnerable by the IUCN, and the Shark Trust describes it as Critically Endangered in the north-east Atlantic. Stocks are heavily restricted, and both the Shark Trust and this guide advise returning every fish alive. If you meet one, treat it as a fish to admire, photograph quickly if you must, and let go. It is a small shark with a big conservation story, and it is worth getting to know.

On the boat

Spurdog are fished with hooks from 2/0 to 4/0 on heavy 80 lb mono or wire. Baits are mackerel strip, herring, sandeel or squid. Midwater feeding is especially common in summer, but the record gives no catch months for Britain and none for Sussex. Mind the spines when landing one, and return it alive. It hunts near the seabed and in midwater for herring, sprats and sandeels,.

British boat-caught record

Confirmed record

Weight	25 lb 4 oz (11.477 kg)
Where	Hastings, East Sussex
When	2017
Angler	Shane Salmon

Confirmed British boat-caught record: Shane Salmon, 25 lb 4 oz (11.477 kg), caught at Hastings, East Sussex, in 2017. The official list gives the year only, not the full date. The official weight-based boat records were frozen in June 2024, and newer claims are by length only.

Care and rules

Release every spurdog alive. It is Vulnerable (IUCN) and stocks are heavily restricted. It has no clear recreational size limit, so check current MMO rules before keeping any. Rules change: check the current rules before you fish.

Did you know?

The spurdog has a sharp spine in front of each dorsal fin, and young fish carry white spots. Its British boat record came from Hastings, East Sussex, in 2017.

Sources: britishseafishing.co.uk Spurdog; britishseafishing.co.uk UK boat records; Kestrel Warrior: Sharks off Brighton; BRFC Sea Fish Records June 2026; Wikimedia Commons image page. The full guide, with links to every source: kestrelwarrior6.co.uk/sea-fish-guide/spurdog/