

2025 Shark Photographer of the Year Competition winners

by Caroline
Robertson-Brown

On Shark Awareness Day, the Shark Trust have announced the winners of its 2025 Shark Photographer of the Year Competition.

Entries came in from 34 countries and represented 76 different species of shark, ray, skate and chimera.

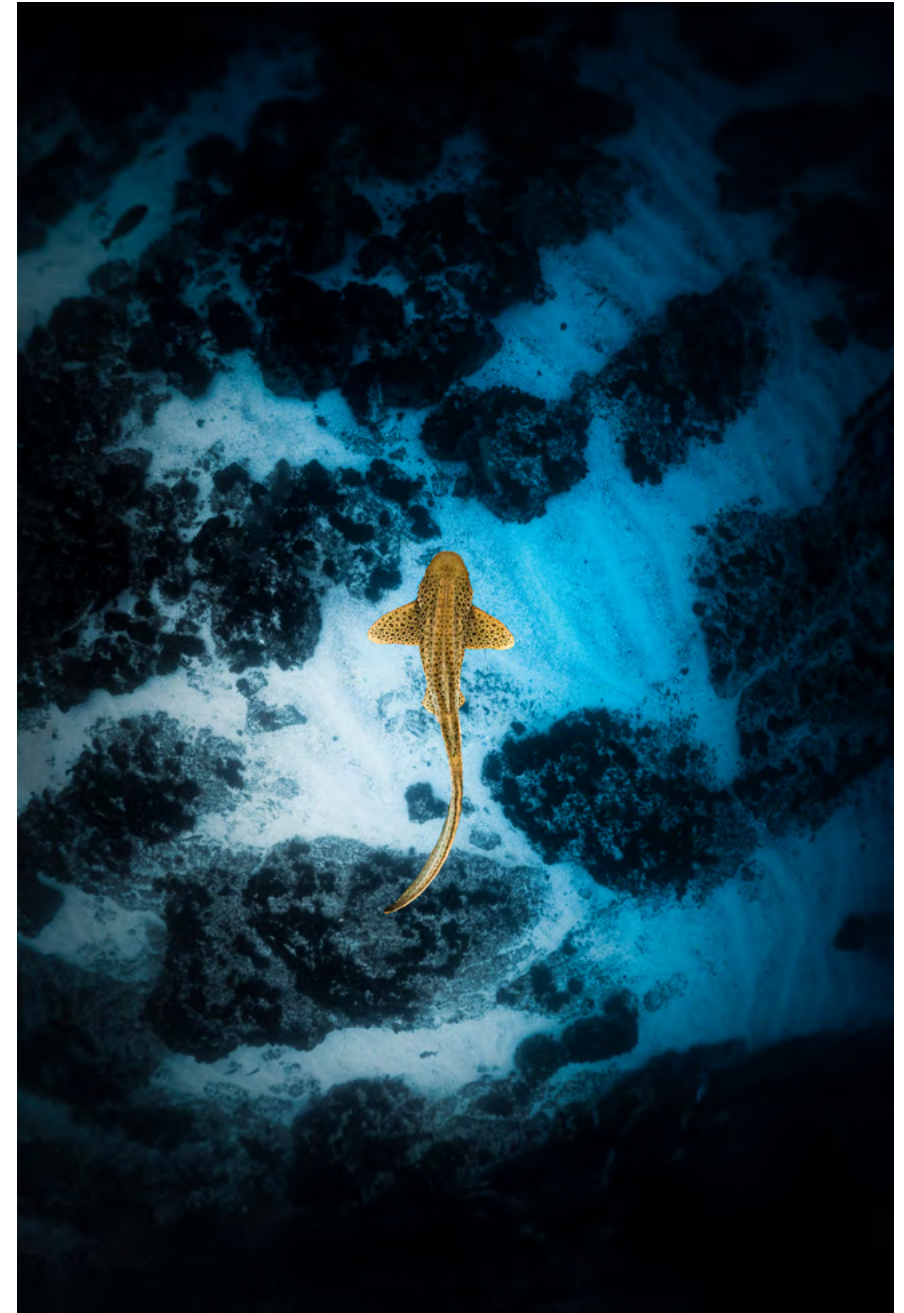
The 14th of July, Shark Awareness Day, is a day to celebrate the over 1200 different species of shark and ray found in our ocean. And the submitted photographs in the Shark Trust competition did just that.

From Australia to Scotland, from South Africa to The Bahamas, sharks and rays of all shapes and sizes have been beautifully photographed and submitted. From rarely seen chimera to the unmistakable Critically Endangered Great Hammerhead Shark.

www.sharktrust.org

Winner: Julian Hebenstreit

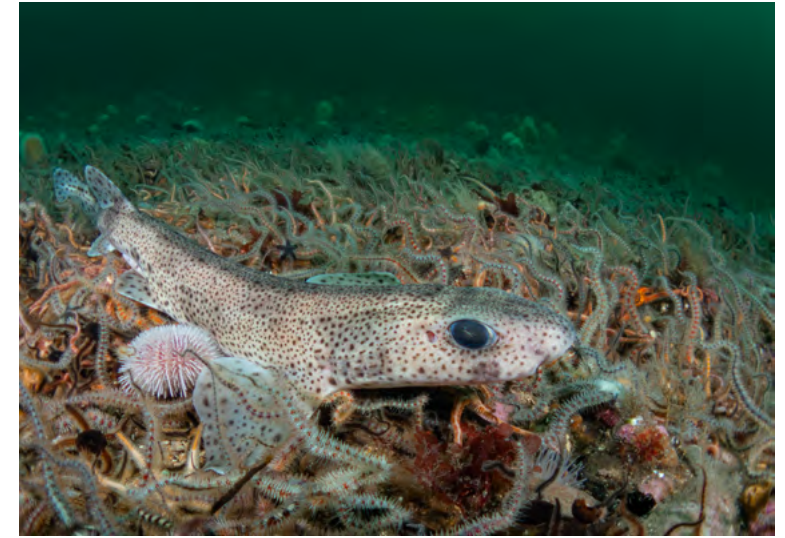
I took this photo at a popular dive site off Byron Bay in New South Wales, Australia. The weather had been terrible all week with strong winds and rain, which persisted when I took this photo. It was cold and dark, strong waves gushing against the small rock island that marks the dive site. When I think back to the moment of this capture, I remember the stark contrast between the wild and uncomfortable outside and the calm and quiet world below the water. The leopard shark is an incredibly elegant shark with its pronounced body lines and long tail fin, carrying an immense presence in the water. I was freediving that day, and the shark passed me at about 15m deep, which is when I decided to try and capture the beauty of this animal to the best of my ability. I selected this image because it reminds me why I do what I do. Why I dive, why I explore, and try to protect. It's not just about documenting wildlife; it's about conveying the fragile beauty of the ocean in a way that makes people care. I believe the contrast in this image is what makes it stand out. You can feel the cold and dark water through the photo, with the warm and angel-like presence of the leopard shark against the frigid background. The opportunity of interacting with a leopard shark is a memory I am intensely grateful for, as there are probably only a handful of locations in the world where you can encounter them consistently. It was truly a privilege to have been able to capture this species and demonstrate the calming yet intense presence that these animals have.



Overseas Winner

Martin Broen

This evocative black-and-white split-shot photograph captures the extraordinary Mobula ray migration off the coast of Baja California, Mexico. Below the surface, a dense school of rays forms a luminous, geometric ballet, their bodies catching shafts of sunlight filtering through the ocean. Above, a small boat with observers floats quietly, a silent witness to one of nature's most graceful spectacles. Each year, thousands of Mobula rays gather in the nutrient-rich waters of the Gulf of California—a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most biodiverse marine environments on the planet. These acrobatic relatives of manta rays are known for their synchronized swimming and aerial leaps, making their migration a breathtaking display of collective behaviour. Baja's Mobula migration is not only a visual marvel but also a vital ecological event. In recent years, conservation efforts by local communities and international organizations have intensified, aiming to curb bycatch, protect critical habitats, and regulate tourism practices. Sustainable ecotourism now plays a growing role in raising awareness and funding for protection, helping ensure that these rays continue their ancient journey through Mexico's marine corridors.

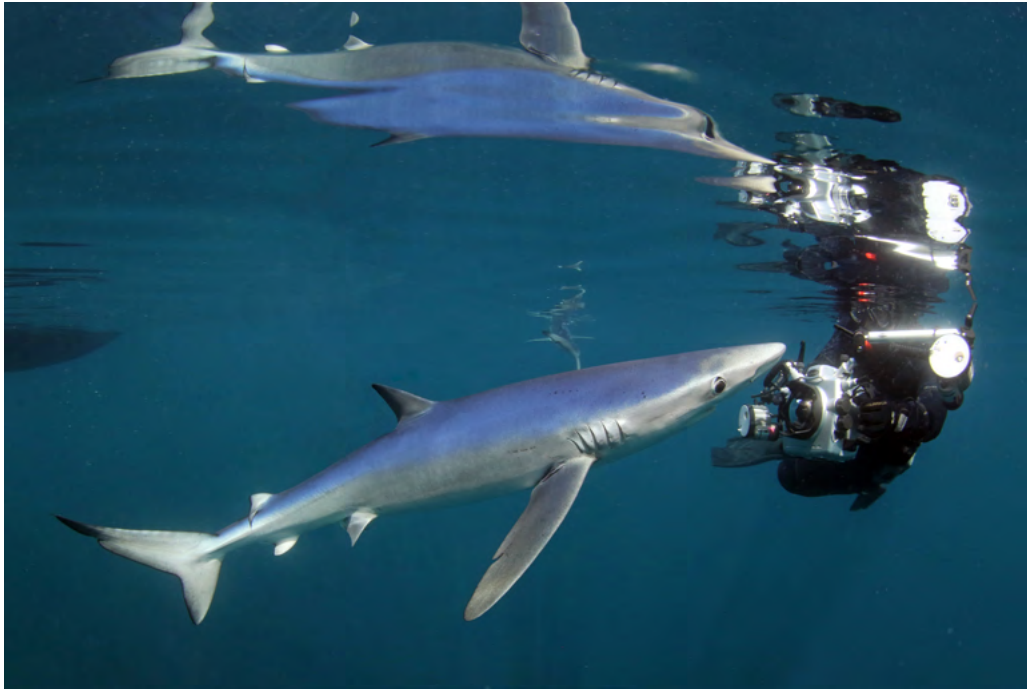


British Isles Winner

Hector Clarke

This image was taken in Loch Carron, Northwestern Scotland. The narrowing of this particular Loch near its junction with the Atlantic forces huge amounts of nutrient rich water through a small channel, creating a hotspot for marine biodiversity. Despite the fierce tidal currents, these narrows are my favourite place in the UK to encounter small-spotted catsharks. I found this individual resting on a bed of brittle starfish at around twenty metres depth. It seemed very comfortable with my presence, allowing me to get exceptionally close. I like how this image captures the density and diversity of life in this area, all the way from the multicoloured brittle stars to the exquisitely patterned catshark.

www.sharktrust.org



Living with Sharks Winner

Gillian Marsh

This is a natural light image, taken while snorkeling in Cornwall approximately 15-17 miles out from Penzance. It was August bank holiday in 2017 and we had amazing conditions, with blue skies and sunshine, clear blue water and flat calm seas. We had put out a chum slick to attract the blue sharks but, over the course of two days, we had it all, not only plenty of sharks, but a group of common dolphins, a large school of blue-fin tuna, a basking shark and even a bait ball in the distance. It was a truly magnificent experience.

The blue sharks were bold and curious and we four snorkelers had a lot of good interactions with them, but I particularly like the interaction in this image. It's tempting to imagine the shark is asking the photographer "Have you got my best side?"



Oceanics Programme Winner

Byron Conroy

This image is of Silky sharks, a surface-dwelling shark that can be found in large numbers in Cuba due to the protection they are afforded in the Jardines de la Reina national park. Cuba is one of very few places on earth with such a population and it is testament to the conservation efforts they have made to preserve their waters. To tell the story of these sharks I used a slow shutter speed to get some natural movement into the image, this also allowed me to use Snell's window at sunset to burn in some beautiful colours from the sunset above and show the relationship these sharks have with the surface. A memorable experience, amongst the best large animal encounters I have had.

www.sharktrust.org

Mediterranean Programme Winner

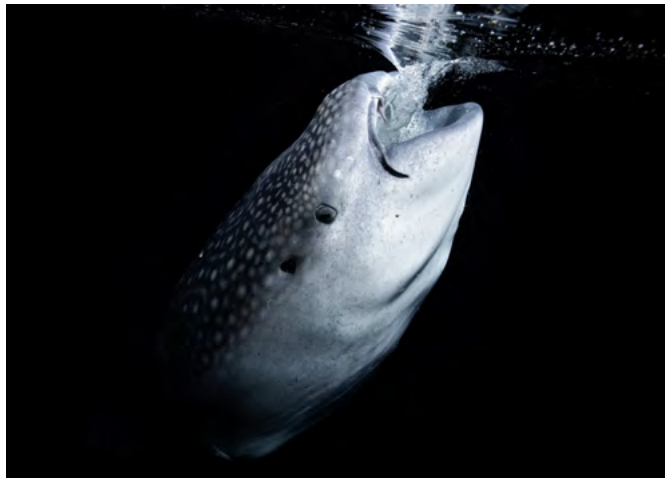
Linda Mazza



This photo was taken off La Graciosa, a tiny island north of Lanzarote, at a dive site called Montaña Amarilla. I selected it for several reasons. Angel sharks are critically endangered, making any encounter special - though sadly, for all the wrong reasons. They're also one of the focus species of the Shark Trust, which adds personal significance to this shot. What I love about this photo is that it doesn't capture the classic, angel-shaped silhouette most commonly seen - usually taken from above to show their unique markings, camouflage, and evolutionary perfection. Instead, this is a close-up portrait, taken purely by chance. I was observing another shark when I suddenly found myself face-to-face with this one. Luckily, I had my camera ready. I quickly zoomed in and captured the moment before quietly moving away so as not to disturb it. The resulting image shows an unusual and perhaps less flattering perspective. It reveals the flattened head, eyes, slightly open mouth, barbels, and skin texture in vivid detail - even the wounds and

imperfections. This raw portrayal highlights not only their vulnerability but also their misunderstood nature in an increasingly threatened ocean. For me, this photo breaks the usual barrier between viewer and shark. It creates an unexpected intimacy. At that moment, I felt incredibly privileged - I could sense the shark's sentience and quiet expressiveness. Seeing its eyes and dermal denticles up close stirred real empathy and awe. Living in the Canary Islands, I see angel sharks on most of my dives, but I had never been face-to-face with one like this. It was a truly special moment.

Young Photographer of the Year Panitbhand Paribatra



This was my first encounter with a Whale Shark, in 2025, in the Maldives. It was such a joyful and unforgettable moment. I was very excited to see with my own eyes the largest fish in the world feeding on some of the smallest living creatures in the ocean. For me, enjoying this moment is not all there is, we must take action to help these giants of the sea to survive. I believe that together we can help Whale Sharks live and swim freely in their ocean home, allowing them to share this planet with us for years to come.

Great Eggcase Hunt Winner Grant Evans



This image was taken on the wreck of the HMSAS Pietermaritzburg, a warship scuttled in 1994 to be an artificial reef in False Bay, South Africa. This image was taken during peak diving season in the area, and this dive showed why, with 20m of visibility and abundant life in the water and on the wreck. Catsharks are my favourite group of sharks, and I was very excited to come across this eggcase, wrapped around a sea fan. I had seen it before, but never so securely, almost strangling the coral. I took this picture as I found it a curious sight, and it is important to acknowledge the sharks' life stages before it is a fully formed shark that is so often seen gliding through the nearby kelp forests. It also highlights the importance of the sea floor for these animals, as they need these sea fans to secure their egg cases safely. Bottom trawling threatens these corals and the egg depositing sites of catsharks in South Africa.

www.sharktrust.org