

Sharks rescued from fish market are released into ocean

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One of the baby sharks released off Malta; photo by David Jones from Sharklab Malta Facebook page

A six-month journey that began with an extraordinary rescue ended in the successful release of three baby sharks into the open seas off Malta on Saturday in front of a sizable crowd of volunteers and conservationists, according to Malta Today.

The nursehound sharks (*Gattarell tar-Rukkal*) were raised from eggs by the Malta National Aquarium, where they were nurtured until they became big enough to fend for themselves in the wild.

The amazing part is where the eggs came from.

Members of Sharklab Malta rescued the eggs from dead sharks that were being sold in fish markets in Valletta.

“The fish market vendors have been extremely helpful in letting Sharklab Malta remove these egg cases from the female sharks,” the aquarium stated on its Facebook page. “These eggs are then kept in a specialized system within the aquarium. The system is kept separate from all the other exhibits to stop cross contamination and the system is temperature controlled.”



Sharks are released on ocean floor; photo is a screen grab from Facebook video by Malta National Aquarium

Sharks are transferred into a sea-temperature container for release in the ocean; photo from Malta National Aquarium Facebook page

The three shark pups were taken from the aquarium in a temperature-controlled bucket and transferred into sea-temperature containers before getting handed off to scuba divers, who released the sharks on the sea floor. Here's video of the release from Malta Today:

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[Try watching this video on www.youtube.com](#), or enable JavaScript if it is disabled in your browser.

The sharks pose no danger to humans. Nursehound sharks grow to a maximum of 3 feet in length. They have no teeth and feed on small crabs, small fish, and calamari.

They are marketed for food in several European countries and are said to be "near threatened," as their population reportedly has declined substantially from overfishing in the Mediterranean Sea. Hence the reason for conservation of the species.

More from Malta Today:

The pups are the result of an embryological project that began as part of research conducted by Sharklab-Malta for data collection at the wholesale fish market in Valletta where members removed any present eggs and placed them into a controlled environment to support development through to hatching.

"Once successfully hatched, the Aquarium and Sharklab closely monitored the pups to help them grow in a healthy manner," [Mike Hutchinson, aquarium curator] said.

"Being top predators, the sharks are likely to survive in the wild," Hutchison explained.

Four more shark pups were hatched at the aquarium last week. They will be closely monitored and raised for six months, and they'll be released, too.

"This would never have happened were it not for the dedication of the Sharklab Malta members who go to the fish market in Valletta at 3 a.m. on a regular basis," Sharklab Malta said on its Facebook page.

A laudable project, to be sure.

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