Ocean Wildlife and Waitrose's Seafood Supply Chain

Waitrose and Seafood Sustainability

The John Lewis Partnership is the UK's largest employee-owned company and the parent company of two cherished retail brands – John Lewis & Partners and Waitrose & Partners, which are owned in Trust by our partners. Over 100 years ago, our founder John Spedan Lewis set out the principles for how our Company should operate and produced a written Constitution to help Partners understand their rights and responsibilities as co-owners.

Waitrose has long championed responsible practices. From our pioneering work across free-range and organic and our support of local British produce, to our efforts to promote the highest possible standards in animal welfare and responsible fishing, we are committed to doing the right thing and continue to grow and align our business to our founding principles of integrity, fairness, and innovation.

Waitrose & Partners has over 300 shops in England, Scotland, Wales, and the Channel Islands, including convenience branches and other at Welcome Break locations. We export products to more than 50 countries worldwide, have nine shops that operate under licence in the Middle East and have a growing omni-channel presence through Waitrose.com, Waitrose Cellar, and Waitrose Florist.

Waitrose welcomes the evaluation of risks to marine endangered, threatened, and protected (ETP) species from fishery bycatch and will take action to address the issues that have been identified. Waitrose will continue to collaborate with Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP), Birdlife International, and Whale and Dolphin Conservation to identify and address issues in the future and ensure, through procurement policies and other measures, that the company's seafood supply chain does not present unacceptable threats to marine wildlife.

Fisheries and Bycatch

Bycatch, the catch of non-target species, is one of the most significant issues affecting the biological sustainability of marine fisheries. In particular, bycatch of endangered, threatened, and protected (ETP) species continues at a global and ecologically significant scale, despite an increase in the number of certified fisheries and improvement projects and public attention to this issue.

Fisheries bycatch is a primary driver of population decline in many ETP species. These populations are at very low levels and are formally listed as endangered, threatened, or protected by international, national, and/or local jurisdictions.

Sharks and rays, seabirds, marine mammals, and sea turtles, all of which are ecologically important to ocean habitats, are at high risk of capture and harm in commercial fisheries. Many of these species are distributed across large geographic areas and overlap multiple fisheries. Many also have life-history characteristics that make them vulnerable to fishing-related mortality, such as slow growth, long reproductive cycles, and production of small numbers of offspring.

One-third of the world's sharks and rays are threatened with extinction.

15 of the 22 species of albatross are threatened with extinction.

Less than 350 North Atlantic right whales remain in the world.

Fisheries bycatch is recognized as the greatest threat to **all seven species of sea turtles**.

Bycatch Audit of Waitrose's Supply Chain

Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP), in conjunction with Birdlife International and Whale and Dolphin Conservation, conducted a review and assessment of the fisheries disclosed by Waitrose in the Ocean Disclosure Project.

The three organizations collaborated to develop criteria to identify fisheries that could be considered high risk for interactions with sharks and rays, seabirds, marine mammals, and sea turtles.

These criteria include:

- The conservation status of the relevant bycatch species, as determined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

- Bycatch rate and evidence of impact at a population level, or high likelihood of bycatch, based on gear type and overlap with susceptible species
- Scale of the specific bycatch problem, e.g., across the world versus limited to one fishery
- Whether the fisheries impact species with a very small range
- Whether the fisheries include cross-taxa bycatch
- Whether Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification has been suspended due to non-compliance with elements of Principle 2 in the MSC Standard.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The audit identified the fisheries in the Waitrose supply chain that present the highest bycatch risks to sharks and rays, seabirds, marine mammals, and sea turtles. Waitrose understands that the issues identified in the audit signal a need to fully address risks to ETP species across all of its sourcing, and commits to working with suppliers to improve fishery management and implement recommended actions.

The risk assessment conducted as part of the audit demonstrates a range of potential bycatch impacts to ETP species from the fisheries that supply Waitrose. The audit identified a number of the fisheries as having the highest potential bycatch risk. A full list of these fisheries will be incorporated into the Waitrose Ocean Disclosure Project (ODP) profile.

SFP reviewed the results of the audit with Waitrose to determine where they can have the most impact by encouraging improvements to reduce ETP bycatch. The following are the top findings of this analysis and the fisheries where Waitrose should prioritize action:

- Alaska salmon set/drift gillnet fisheries pose a significant risk to seabirds.
- Icelandic cod/haddock trawl and longline fisheries pose a significant risk to seabirds and marine mammals.
- Canadian (American) lobster pot and trap fisheries pose a risk to marine mammals.

- Longline tuna fisheries pose a significant threat to sharks, seabirds, and sea turtles.

A number of common themes also emerged from the analysis. These were presented to Waitrose with the following key recommendations, for work with their suppliers across various fisheries:

- Levels of bycatch monitoring are generally poor, and there is a need to adopt higher levels of observer coverage.

- There is an urgent need for a significant increase in the levels of bycatch incident reporting (which should be regular, detailed, and standardized). Data on bycatch needs to be placed in the public domain and be available to all stakeholders.

- There is minimal effort to continuously improve bycatch reduction. Bycatch mitigation should aim to adopt best practices at all times

- There is a clear need for a systematic examination of alternative gear options in fisheries where there are high bycatch risks, e.g., move away from gillnet fisheries.