PRESS RELEASE

From Silky Sharks at sunset in Cuba to glow-in-the-dark catsharks in Scotland,

The Shark Trust announces the winners of Shark Photographer of the Year 2026

Embargoed until 9pm (GMT) Friday 27th November

The Shark Trust has announced the winners of the *Shark Photographer of the Year* 2026 competition, which celebrates the diversity and beauty of sharks, rays and chimaeras through exceptional underwater photography. Many people may never have the opportunity to see a shark or ray in the wild, so compelling imagery is vital to help people connect with these awe-inspiring ocean dwellers and better understand the conservation work of the Shark Trust.

This year's competition saw 394 images taken in 39 countries, featuring 57 species. The eight winning images came from eight different countries, spanning four continents, showcasing the largest fish in the sea, the Whale Shark, to a diminutive shark that can "walk" across the reef on its fins, the Epaulette Shark.

Ollie Clarke has been crowned *Shark Photographer of the Year 2026* with a portfolio featuring Scalloped Hammerheads in Japan, a Shortfin Mako in Mexico and a Whale Shark in Australia. His winning prize is a shark-diving trip to South Africa courtesy of competition sponsors Diverse Travel and Agulhas House & Diving.

Ollie said: ""*I am thrilled to have won Shark Photographer of the Year 2026! I've been obsessed with sharks and followed them all over the world for many years now, so this really means a lot to me. Supporting shark conservation for me is so important as these animals are some of the most endangered and heavily fished species on the planet.*"

To enter the competition, photographers were invited to submit a portfolio of three images, which were scored by the panel of judges – Simon Rogerson, Charles Hood and Nick Robertson-Brown, all heavyweights in the underwater photography world. The combined score for all three images decided the overall winner.

Category winners

Images were submitted to five categories which cover different aspects of the Shark Trust's conservation work.

Overseas - **Pauline Vas Branco:** Pauline's photograph of Oceanic Whitetip Sharks following a dive boat at Cat Island, The Bahamas impressed all the judges and got the highest score of any image in this year's competition. Pauline won a Sirius Dive Computer sponsored by Mares.

British & Irish - James Lynpott: A remarkable image of two Smallspotted Catsharks displaying biofluorescence was captured by James during a night diving in Loch

Fyne, Scotland using specialist camera equipment. James won a diving regulator set sponsored by Apeks.

Oceanic Sharks - Adam Martin: A striking split-shot (a tricky technique to perfect!) of a group of Silky Sharks at sunset in Cuba. This category highlights the Shark Trust's Oceanics Programme which focuses conservation effort on oceanic sharks and rays, a group facing significant threat from overfishing. Adam won a dive bag sponsored by Aqualung.

Living with Sharks - Balázs Fodor: An imaginative split-shot shows a person walking along the shoreline with an Epaulette Shark seen in the shallows. The category reflects the Shark Trust's Living with Sharks programme which explores human-shark interactions and seeks to identify emerging conflict issues. Balázs won a underwater photography Apollo Strobe sponsored by Marelux.

Mermaid's Purse - Kirsty Andrews: A detailed photograph of a Smallspotted Catshark developing inside its eggcase, taken on a drift dive off Rathlin Island, Northern Ireland. This image highlights the Shark Trust's Great Eggcase Hunt, a citizen science project that has seen more than 630,000 eggcases recorded since 2003, but with less than 1% of those from underwater finds. Kirsty won a bundle of goodies sponsored by Mermaid Gin.

A further 30 underwater photographers were awarded runners-up, third, highly commended and commended and the full set of 34 images can be seen on the Shark Trust website here: sharktrust.org/spy26-results

Judge, Simon Rogerson, said: "*I was truly taken aback by the quality of the images; scoring them was a privilege. Photographers are continually upping their game by using new techniques to make the most of every hard-won opportunity. Photography plays a vital role in helping the public come to understand sharks and their role in the ecosystem; this competition gave us new insights into the lives of these amazing creatures. Congratulations to the winners, and my sincere thanks to everyone who entered SPY26 for making it such a success*."

The Shark Trust also thanks everyone that entered. The images will help support its conservation work, illustrating the beauty of sharks and rays and the importance of protecting them.

This competition was made possible with the support of sponsors and so thanks are also extended to Diverse Travel, Agulhas House & Diving, Mares, Apeks, Marelux, Aqualung and Mermaid Gin.

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Notes for Editors

Access to Winning Images

A selection of winning images is available to be used alongside this press release.

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/crl716innbkjl437hem8v/AGkJOWBuxgWe08o5LR3jtFM?rlkey=5t8p6bj3k2vuu5iqxdeentnv5&st=ksry0q9w&dl=0

Each image is named as follows: SPY26 + Category - Photographer Name (species and country where the image was taken).

Image use

Please credit every image used as follows: SPY26 / Photographer Name

You will find the photographer's name in the image file name

Image use is ONLY permitted alongside this press release promoting the competition results

Image Descriptions

Please find an additional document with details of the winning images, as provided by the photographers.

Accompanying Information

A staggering 394 images, taken in 39 different countries, were submitted to the *Shark Photographer of the Year* (SPY). The country featured the most was The Bahamas, a top shark and ray diving destination whose waters have been a designated shark sanctuary for decades. Other top featuring countries include the UK, Australia and the Maldives. Entries included shots from an impressive 57 different species. This may be a fraction of the more than 1200 species that inhabit our Ocean, but it's still an incredible total for a competition that relies on divers and snorkelers encountering their subjects underwater! The Blue Shark was the species with the most entries – which may not be a total surprise give that ecotourism ventures are active in many countries, including the UK – with the Tiger Shark and the Whale Shark also featuring in the top three species submissions.

The Shark Trust

The Shark Trust is a UK-based charity that works tirelessly to safeguard the future of sharks, and their close cousins, the skates and rays, around the world. They have a vision: A future where sharks thrive within a globally healthy marine ecosystem. Whilst the team, based in Plymouth, is relatively small, its successes have been considerable. This is partly due to the collaborative philosophy of the charity, working with a global network of scientists, policymakers, conservation professionals, businesses, and supporters, to further shark conservation. Established in 1997 to provide a voice for sharks, the Shark Trust has an ever-growing number of passionate supporters. And together they're creating positive change for sharks around the world.

www.sharktrust.org