

CMFRI develops digital tools for awareness on protected sharks

To intensify awareness about protected and endangered sharks and rays, the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (ICAR-CMFRI) has developed a mobile application ‘Shark Aware’ and an interactive e-learning module on these species.

V E Abdul Gafoor, Kerala Fisheries Minister released the digital tools. The app and E-Learning module were developed by a scientific team led by Livi Wilson, senior scientist, Finfish Fisheries Division of the institute with the financial support from the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB).

The Shark Aware mobile app is designed to help users identify legally protected sharks and rays and provide easy access to scientific, legal, and conservation-related information. The app includes details of protected elasmobranch species listed under Schedules I, II, and IV of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2022. It provides species identification features, legal protection status, international trade regulation information, and conservation significance in a user-friendly format.

The app will benefit fishermen, fisheries officials, wildlife enforcement officers, researchers, students, and the general public, offering information on accurate identification of protected sharks and rays, strengthen the effective implementation of the Act, and support conservation efforts, said Livi Wilson.

The interactive e-learning module is a self-learning digital platform developed to improve knowledge on protected sharks and rays. The module includes multiple-choice quiz, instant assessment, and learning progress evaluation. It covers topics such as the Wild Life (Protection) Act, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), species identification, and the conservation importance of protected elasmobranchs in an interactive and easy-to-understand format.

The module serves as an effective training and capacity-building tool for students, researchers, fisheries and wildlife officials, and the general public. This will enable users to acquire scientific knowledge on protected sharks and rays anytime and anywhere through self-paced learning, thereby strengthening awareness and conservation of these species.