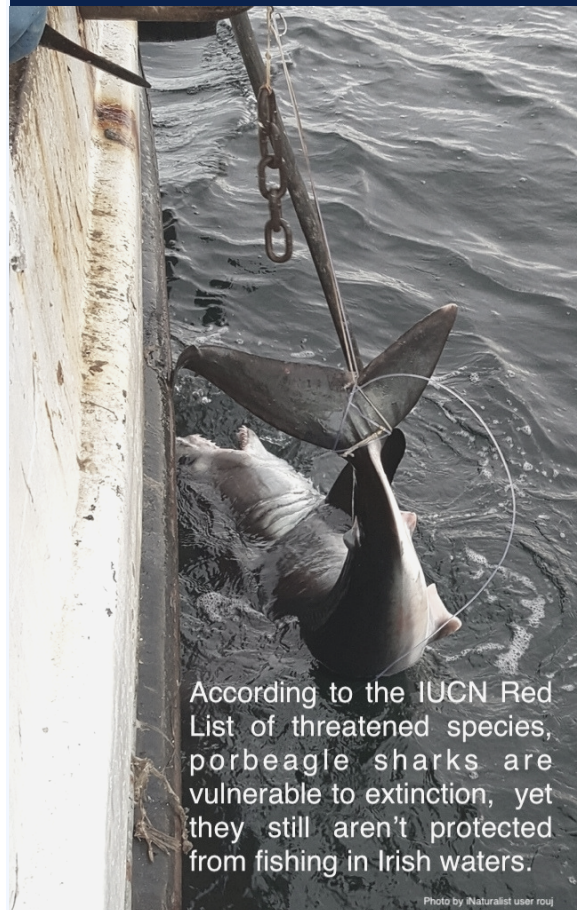


# NO LUCK FOR IRISH FISH

*Endangered Irish sea creatures need the same legal protection as Ireland's land animals!*



## WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

### *Marine Species Aren't Treated Like Wildlife...*

It's going to take a lot more than luck to get Ireland's saltwater fauna out of their rut. From well-known threats such as plastic pollution, to the under-acknowledged dangers of overfishing, the marine life living in the outskirts of the Emerald Isle is in trouble deeper than the waters they swim in. According to the Irish Wildlife Trust, nearly half a hundred marine species are in danger of dying out, at least on a local scale. This includes Atlantic halibut, kaleidoscope jellies, the economically important native oyster, and a whole school of shark species such as basking sharks, angel sharks and porbeagle sharks (a poor beagle, indeed!).

Adding salt to an already salty wound is the fact that struggling sea creatures aren't even protected by Ireland's Wildlife Act, which offers direly needed support for furry landlubbers. Unlike air-breathing Irish animals, fish and aquatic invertebrates don't have protected areas set aside for them, and they're at the mercy of hunters regardless of whether their population can handle the pressure. While it's unreasonable to ban people from fishing entirely, the longterm viability of doing so is itself threatened without rules in place that allow threatened species to recover.

**Because marine species aren't legally regarded as wildlife, they aren't legally protected as wildlife.**

"[THE WILDLIFE ACT] EXPRESSLY EXCLUDES THE LISTING OF MARINE FISH AND INVERTEBRATES WITHOUT THE BLESSING OF THE MINISTER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR FISHERIES"

**-2018 IWT REPORT**





# WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

## *Treat Marine Species Like Wildlife!*

While many of the problems plaguing Irish sea creatures don't have simple solutions, the good news is that this particular issue has a relatively quick and easy fix!

Safeguarding sea creatures by giving them the same legal protection already granted to wildlife is straightforward - just tweak the definition of wildlife to include marine life as well.

It is expressly stated in the Wildlife Act of 1976 that whoever is responsible for overseeing fisheries, which would currently be the Minister of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, has the authority to make such a change.

Perhaps easier said than done, but any paperwork headache that this shift might entail will be more than offset by the environmental gains and benefits to the Irish people.

As an island nation, the ocean's influence can be seen quite literally everywhere - from jagged, sea-sculpted coastlines to famed dishes such as oysters from the western coast. The surrounding waves have acted as a barrier and provided resources, allowing Irish culture to flourish in isolation.

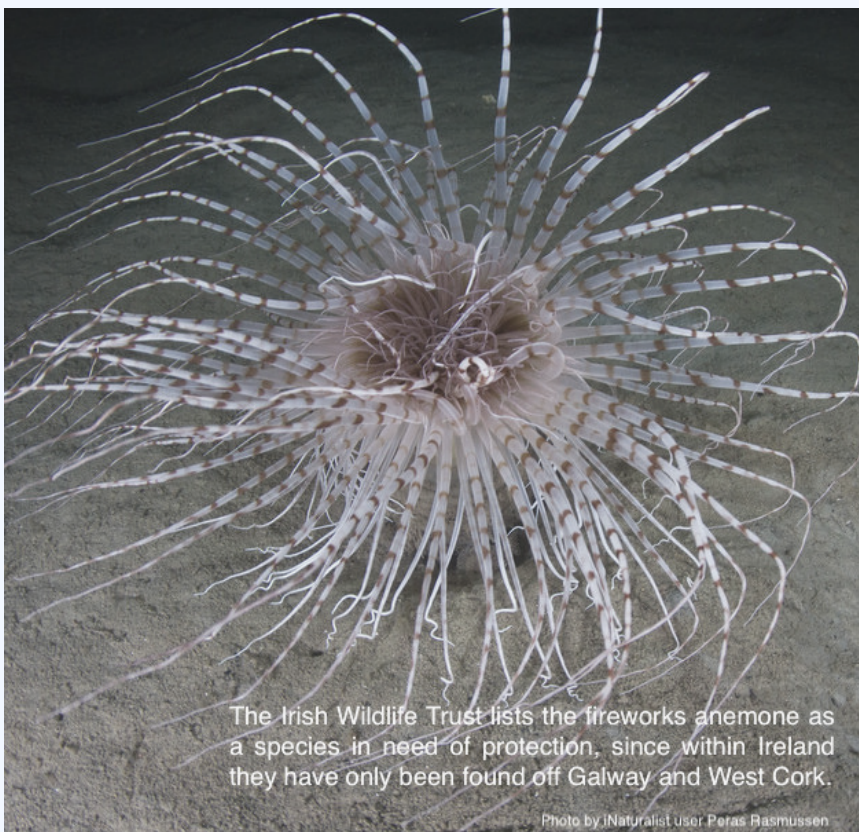
But now, the contents of those waves are in peril - and with them, a way of life. Not to mention the irreplaceable biodiversity that has a value outside the context of society.

**In short, marine lives are wild lives in need of legal protection. The Irish ocean is a wilderness that, in the absence of wildlife, will cease to exist.**



The short-snouted seahorse is just one of two European seahorse species. They are sparsely distributed across their range, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation. Designating safe spaces for them in Irish waters could help them to persist.

Photo by iNaturalist user v\_s\_



The Irish Wildlife Trust lists the fireworks anemone as a species in need of protection, since within Ireland they have only been found off Galway and West Cork.

Photo by iNaturalist user Peras Rasmussen

### REFERENCES & FURTHER READING:

*"Press Release: IWT calls for better legal protection for marine life."*  
(<https://iwt.ie/press-release-iwt-calls-better-legal-protection-marine-life/>)

*"Protecting Our Ocean's Wealth – A Proposal for Legal Protection of Threatened Marine Species."*  
(<https://iwt.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Protecting-our-ocean-wealth-Jan18.pdf>)

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