# Lewis Pugh completes 60-mile swim to fight shark stigma and urge global protection



Endurance swimmer and conservationist Lewis Pugh has recently completed an ambitious 60-mile swim around Martha's Vineyard, an effort timed to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the film "Jaws." Speaking passionately upon finishing the swim, Pugh emphasised the urgent need to change the negative narrative surrounding sharks, which have long been portrayed as ruthless predators due to the film's influence. He stated unequivocally, "We must stop killing sharks," highlighting the perilous situation these apex predators face from commercial fishing and widespread indifference.

Pugh’s journey began in relatively calm conditions but quickly turned challenging, with rough weather causing him to struggle through cold temperatures and strong currents. Despite these hurdles, he managed to complete the swim over 12 strenuous days, asserting that risks were ever-present. On two occasions, hostile weather limited his distance to just a mile, an experience he described as "mentally exhausting." Yet, he recognised the importance of this swim as a "once-in-a-generation opportunity" to advocate for shark protection on a global platform.

Each year, an estimated 100 million sharks are killed worldwide, averaging around 174,000 per day. Pugh stressed that this staggering figure reflects the threats posed not only by overfishing but also by societal indifference towards these essential creatures. "When you kill all the sharks, it leads to ecological collapse. It’s that simple," he asserted during his time in the water. Sharks play a crucial role in maintaining the balance of marine ecosystems, controlling fish populations that graze on vital ocean vegetation like seagrass meadows and kelp forests. Without them, these habitats risk overgrazing, which could severely threaten marine biodiversity and carbon storage.

In an era of climate change and environmental degradation, Pugh's advocacy extends beyond his personal challenges in the water. He is set to address attendees at the upcoming UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France, where he aims to advocate for increased protections, including the establishment of marine protected areas covering 30% of the world's oceans by 2030, a goal referred to as "30×30." Furthermore, he intends to push for enhanced legal protections for vulnerable shark species during the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) conference later this year.

Pugh’s initiatives also include the Lewis Pugh Foundation’s Shark Champion programme, which seeks to change public perceptions about sharks and educate younger generations about their ecological importance. Resources like the storybook "The Adventures of Shark Stanley and Friends" aim to communicate these vital messages to children, fostering a sense of responsibility and respect for ocean life.

While Pugh’s swim aimed to raise awareness, it also served as a reminder that protecting sharks is a shared global responsibility. "It’s not enough to just swim; we need systemic change," he remarked, further reinforcing the necessity for collaborative efforts to safeguard our oceans for future generations.

As Pugh continues this important work, the message is clear: sharks are not monsters, but rather magnificent creatures that play an indispensable role in the health of our oceans. By shifting public perception and advocating for stronger conservation measures, there is hope for a more balanced and thriving marine ecosystem.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/lewis-pugh-warns-we-must-protect-sharks-as-he-completes-swim-to-mark-jaws-50th-FIMMVP77L5LSPNJP7MF4GVVU7I/), [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/9979b37a180fb89bff7390af4b887cfc)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/lewis-pugh-warns-we-must-protect-sharks-as-he-completes-swim-to-mark-jaws-50th-FIMMVP77L5LSPNJP7MF4GVVU7I/), [[4]](https://apnews.com/article/011ae792837879b96122e31324b24553)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/26336502dfe9309dd0ca3d06844fbcf4), [[5]](https://www.lewispughfoundation.org/shark-champion)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/10/sport/lewis-pugh-red-sea-swim-cop27-spt-intl/index.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/lewis-pugh-warns-we-must-protect-sharks-as-he-completes-swim-to-mark-jaws-50th-FIMMVP77L5LSPNJP7MF4GVVU7I/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/9979b37a180fb89bff7390af4b887cfc> - Endurance swimmer Lewis Pugh completed a 60-mile swim around Martha's Vineyard, aiming to raise awareness about shark conservation ahead of the 50th anniversary of the film 'Jaws'. Facing cold temperatures and rough seas, Pugh highlighted the urgent need to protect sharks, citing alarming statistics about global shark deaths. His swim was accompanied by safety teams using non-harmful shark deterrents. Pugh plans to continue advocating for shark conservation by engaging policymakers and the public. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/9979b37a180fb89bff7390af4b887cfc?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://apnews.com/article/26336502dfe9309dd0ca3d06844fbcf4> - Endurance swimmer Lewis Pugh is attempting to become the first person to swim around Martha's Vineyard, a challenging 62-mile journey expected to take about 12 days. The swim, taking place in frigid 47-degree Fahrenheit (8-degree Celsius) waters during the start of white shark migration season, is timed to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the movie 'Jaws'. Pugh, 55, intends to use the event to raise awareness about shark conservation, emphasizing that the 1975 film unfairly depicted sharks as ruthless predators. By drawing attention to the plight of these vulnerable creatures, Pugh hopes to shift public perception and advocate for increased protections. His journey began shortly after the New England Aquarium confirmed the first seasonal white shark sighting off Nantucket. The event is being documented through a curated photo gallery and livestream coverage. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/26336502dfe9309dd0ca3d06844fbcf4?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://apnews.com/article/011ae792837879b96122e31324b24553> - Endurance swimmer Lewis Pugh is attempting a historic 62-mile swim around Martha’s Vineyard, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the film 'Jaws'. Known for his swims in extreme environments—from Mount Everest’s glacial waters to the Arctic—Pugh is undertaking this challenge without a wetsuit in 47°F (8°C) water to raise awareness about shark conservation. As the United Nations Patron of the Oceans, Pugh aims to shift public perception of sharks from feared predators to essential components of marine ecosystems, citing that approximately 100 million sharks are killed annually. He uses a 'Shark Shield' to safely deter the animals and receives support from a safety team during the expected 12-day swim. Pugh critiques the lasting negative impact 'Jaws' has had on sharks, although he acknowledges the film also inspired increased marine research. Marine biologist Greg Skomal and even the film’s creators have since advocated for shark conservation, recognizing overfishing and climate threats as significant dangers. Pugh hopes his swim promotes environmental protection and public education on sharks’ vital ecological role. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/011ae792837879b96122e31324b24553?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.lewispughfoundation.org/shark-champion> - The Lewis Pugh Foundation's Shark Champion initiative aims to change public perception of sharks, moving away from the fear instilled by films like 'Jaws'. Through educational resources such as the storybook 'The Adventures of Shark Stanley and Friends', the foundation seeks to teach children about the importance of oceans and the role of sharks in marine ecosystems. The initiative also highlights the need for global shark sanctuaries to help repopulate threatened species. ([lewispughfoundation.org](https://www.lewispughfoundation.org/shark-champion?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/10/sport/lewis-pugh-red-sea-swim-cop27-spt-intl/index.html> - In November 2022, Lewis Pugh completed the world's first swim across the Red Sea, a 16-day journey covering 350 miles. The swim aimed to raise awareness about the threats facing the Red Sea's coral reefs and marine life. Pugh encountered various challenges, including the risk of shark encounters, with around 40 different species present in the Red Sea. To mitigate this, his support boat was equipped with an electronic device capable of repelling sharks within a four-meter radius. Despite the challenges, Pugh was mesmerized by the vibrant coral reefs and diverse marine life he encountered during the swim. ([cnn.com](https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/10/sport/lewis-pugh-red-sea-swim-cop27-spt-intl/index.html?utm_source=openai))