

basking sharks: tagging tells us more



Basking sharks are a vulnerable species protected in UK waters. There are gaps in our scientific knowledge about them, notably their biology, annual migration, and the relationship between regional population declines and global trends.

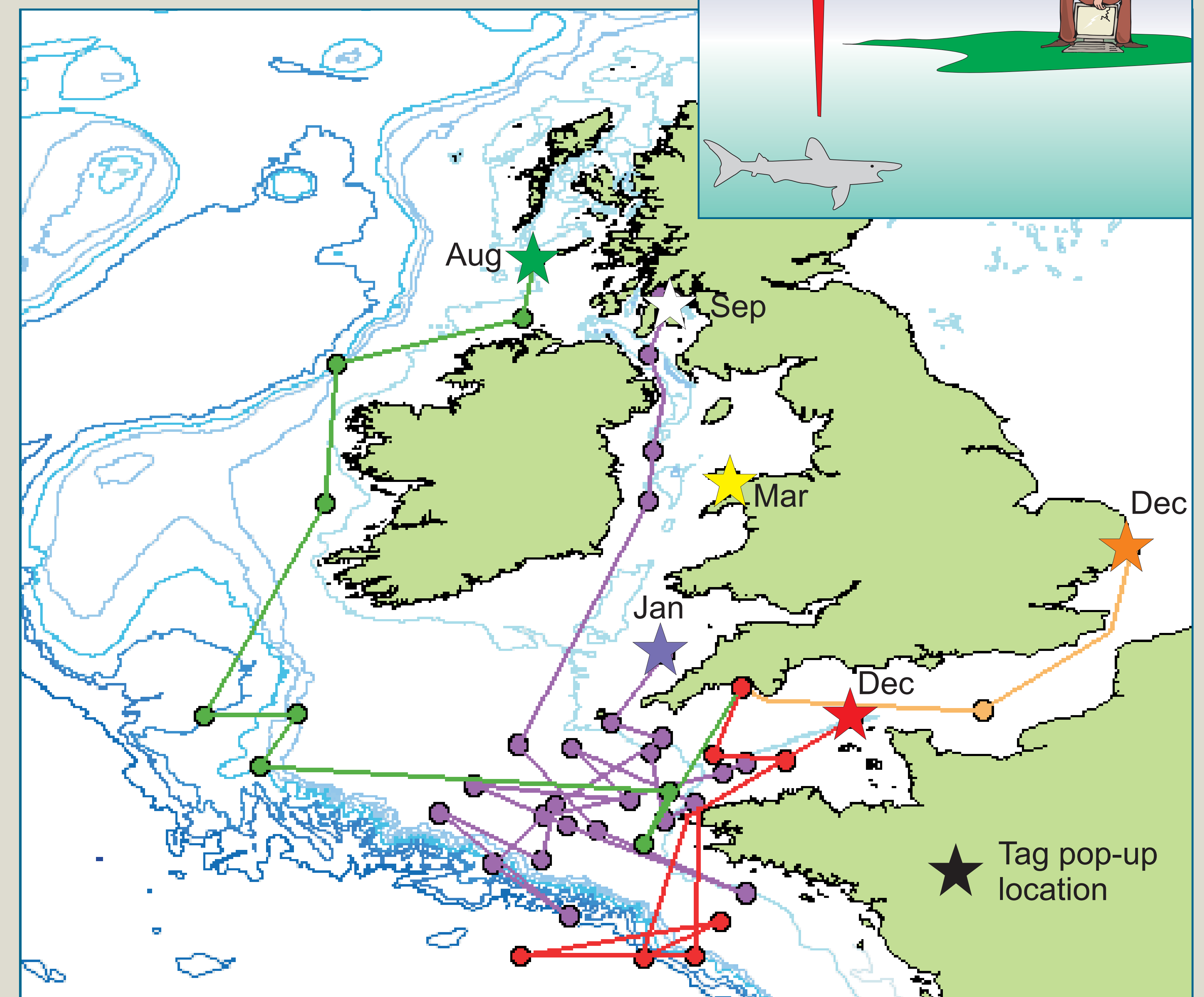
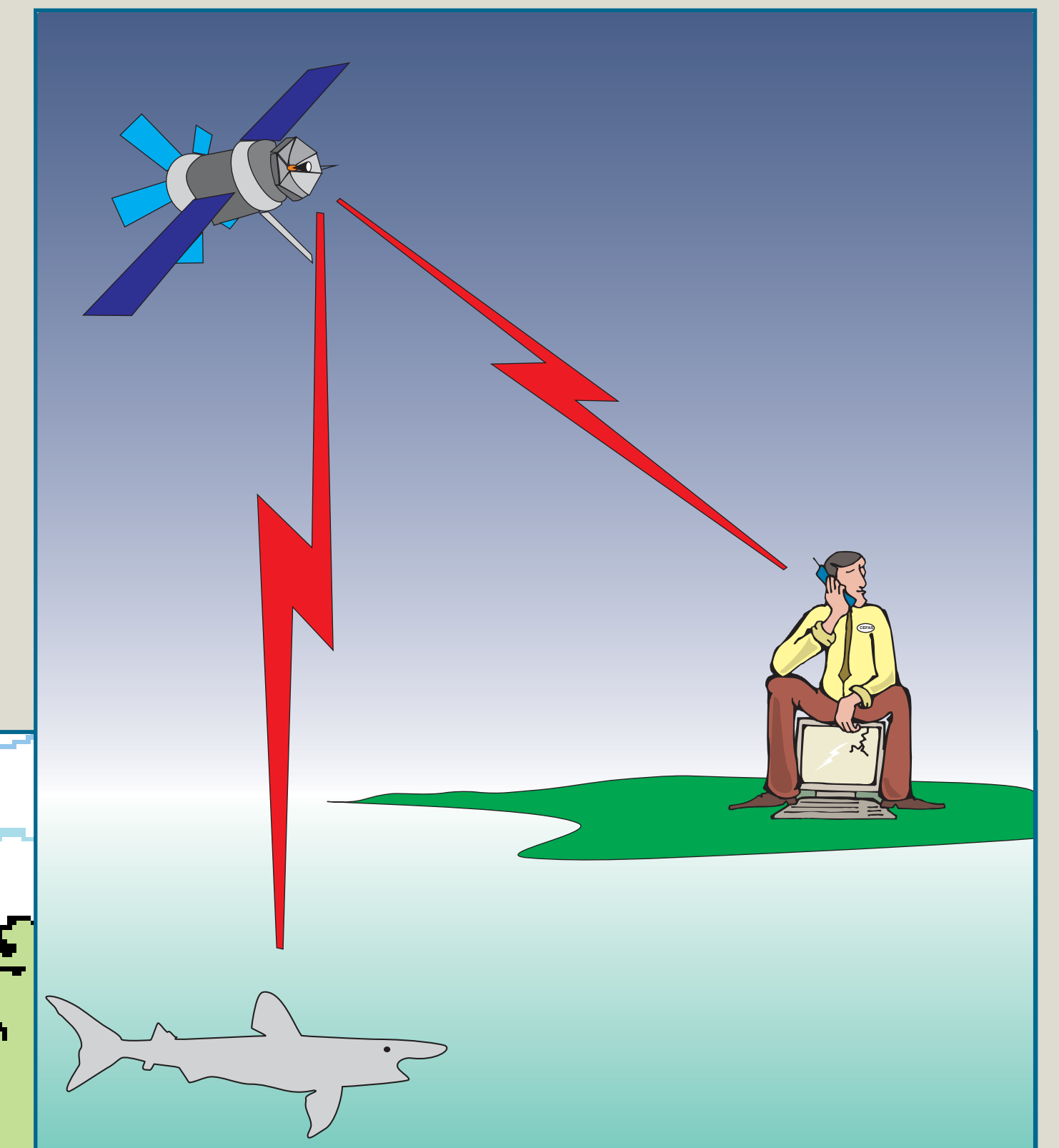


Tagging with Pop-up Archival Transmitting (PAT) tags is helping scientists to learn more about basking sharks.

PAT tags were attached to basking sharks in UK waters in 2001 and 2002. The tags were programmed to 'pop up' at intervals of 3, 6, 9 or 12 months to gain a full picture of the sharks' seasonal movements.

Once at the sea surface, the tags transmit data back to the lab via satellite. Some tags also floated to shore and were found by members of the public and sent back to the CEFAS lab for analysis.

Newer pop-up 'telephone tags' were used in 2004. These electronic tags gather time-related data on depth and seawater temperature. When these tags pop-up and drift close to the shore they relay their data back to the lab via the cellular telephone system.



The information gathered sheds light on the basking sharks' various locations during their annual migration cycle, as well as insights into their vertical movements and feeding behaviour.