



Dispatches From The Wild, Weird World Of Humanity And Its Biosphere

December 1 2021

Germany



After the [German federal elections in September 2021](#), six major parties won seats in the Bundestag, the German legislature which will choose the next Chancellor, succeeding the outgoing Angela Merkel. Now, three of those parties, the Social Democrats (SPD), the environmentalist Greens, and the libertarian-ish business-friendly Free Democrats (FDP), have agreed to form a government. (Pictured above, left to right, the party leaders: Annalena Baerbock and Robert Habeck of the Greens, Olaf Scholz of the SPD, and Christian Lindner of the FDP). Together, they command a majority of seats in the Bundestag, and they've just released a 178-page agreement formalizing their intention to vote in Olaf Scholz, leader of the Social Democrats, as the next Chancellor of Germany, and outlining the policies they intend to pass into law together. This may seem like, and indeed is, a fairly standard and unremarkable piece of coalition-building in European-style parliamentary politics. However, what makes

it interesting is that this ["traffic-light" coalition](#) (so named for the red of the SDP, green of the Greens, and yellow of the FDP) has committed to some [admirably and appropriately ambitious climate policies](#). The incoming German government is committed to **phasing out coal power by 2030** (up from the previous German target year of 2038), **reaching 80% renewable electricity by 2030** (up from [43% in the first three quarters of 2021](#)), **getting 15 million electric vehicles on German roads by 2030**, and committing to making sure that the **price of carbon** (i.e. fee charged for emitting one tonne of carbon under the [EU cap-and-trade system](#)) doesn't go below **60 euros per tonne**.

In addition to Olaf Scholz as chancellor and Christian Lindner as finance minister (Treasury Secretary-equivalent), Green co-leader Annalena Baerbock is to be foreign minister (Secretary of State-equivalent) and the other Green co-leader, Robert Habeck, is to lead a **new combined "super-ministry" with responsibility for the economy and climate action**.

This traffic-light coalition now taking power is pretty politically impressive, with a wide base of support: in American terms, the alliance might perhaps be described as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Joe Biden, and Mitt Romney forming a government and committing to strong climate action. Even better, critically, their main opposition consists of Angela Merkel's old party of the Christian Democrats, a faction of sane, moderate-to-centrist, non-climate-denying conservatives (a sadly rare breed in American politics). Furthermore, these new commitments boost even further Europe's rapid move away from coal, leaving [Poland, Czechia, and Bulgaria](#) as the last three EU countries set to still be using considerable amounts of coal in 2030.

This writer looks forward to strong climate action from Germany in the next decade, continuing the [worldwide acceleration of the renewables revolution](#)!



Shortfin Mako Sharks



The shortfin mako shark ([Isurus oxyrinchus](#), pictured) is endangered and in greater peril every year, slaughtered en masse by sport fishing, commercial

fishing, and bycatch. Shortfin makos can swim at up to 45 miles (74 km) per hour, making them "[probably the fastest shark](#)", and are [possibly quite intelligent](#), with the largest known brain-to-body ratio of any shark species. However, they also mature slowly, with a gestation period of 18 months, females unable to reproduce until 19 years old, and only [four to twelve pups](#) born every three years, making it hard for populations to recover from overfishing.

Now, [52 fishing countries](#) comprising International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), including (critically) fishing titans like the US, China, and Japan, has [finally agreed on the first-ever round of protective regulations](#), hopefully the first step to saving the species. (Yes, the tuna regulatory group ended up being responsible for shark regulations. Fisheries law is weird).

Starting in 2022 and continuing through 2023, it will be absolutely [forbidden to catch shortfin mako sharks in the North Atlantic](#). Notably, this is a full retention ban: it won't just be illegal to catch shortfin mako sharks in the Atlantic, it'll be illegal to bring any dead ones to shore. This ensures the closure in this instance of an age-old loophole in fisheries regulations, perhaps best summarized as the "it just showed up in our net by accident, honest, so we might as well sell it now" argument. After 2023, North Atlantic mako shark catching will only be allowed the total bycatch from the previous year has not exceeded 250 metric tonnes.

Activists are pushing to extend the ban to further protect the slow-reproducing shark, but this is a good first step to safeguard a unique piece of Earth's biological heritage!



The Weekly Anthropocene

Email Address:
samuel.matey@maine.edu

Contact Us Today

