

Shark Finning

What is Shark Finning?

- Shark finning refers to the removal and retention of shark fins and the discard at sea of the carcass. The shark is most often still alive when it is tossed back into the water. Unable to swim, and bleeding to death, the shark suffers a slow death where 95% of the animal is wasted.
- Shark finning takes place at sea so the fishers have only the fins to transport, and have no need for refrigeration. Shark meat is considered low value and therefore not worth the cost of transporting the bulky shark bodies to market.
- Any shark is taken – regardless of age, size, or species.
- Long lines are the most widespread method of fishing for sharks.
- Shark finning is widespread, and largely unmanaged and unmonitored.
- Shark finning has increased over the past decade due to the increasing demand for shark fins (for shark fin soup and traditional cures), improved fishing technology, and improved market economics.
- Shark specialists estimate that more than 100 million sharks are killed for their fins annually.
- One pound of dried shark fin can retail for \$300 or more. It's a multi-billion dollar industry.

Impacts of Shark Finning

- Loss and devastation of shark populations around the world. Experts estimate that within a decade, numerous species of sharks will be lost because of long lining.
- Unsustainable fishery. The massive quantity of sharks harvested and lack of selection deplete shark populations faster than their reproductive abilities sustain.
- Threatens the stability of marine ecosystems.
- Loss of sharks as a food staple for many developing countries.
- Large industrial, foreign fishing vessels that threaten traditional sustainable fisheries invade local waters.
- Obstructs the collection of species-specific data that are essential for monitoring catches and implementing sustainable fisheries management.

Are there laws against shark finning?

- Each country with a coastline is responsible for laws and regulations pertaining to fishing in their waters.

- A number of countries have shark-finning legislation. Many stipulate that fins must arrive in a 5 per cent weight ratio of the shark carcasses onboard. Only a few countries demand that sharks arrive in port with fins attached.
- According to the IUCN Shark Specialist group, the easiest way to implement a ban is to require that shark carcasses be landed with fins attached. The possession of fins alone on vessels would thus be illegal.
- Shark finning violates the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.
- Shark finning is contrary to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's International Plan for the Conservation and Management of Sharks.
- The United Nations Convention on the Trade of Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES) lists the whale shark, basking shark, and great white shark as species that could become threatened if trade is not controlled. To date, 169 countries have agreed to be legally bound by CITES.

Websites about sharks and shark finning

Sea Shepherd Conservation Society
www.seashepherd.org

WildAid
www.wildaid.org

Shark Trust
www.sharktrust.org

Shark Project
www.sharkproject.org

The Florida Museum of Natural History/American Elasmobranch Society/International Shark Attack File
www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/

ReefQuest Centre for Shark Research
<http://elasma-research.org/>

Sources:

IUCN Shark Specialist Group. "IUCN Information Paper. Shark Finning." 2003.
 IUCN Shark Specialist Group. "Shark Specialist Group Finning Statement."
 Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. www.seashepherd.org. "Long line Fishing."
 WildAid & Co-Habitat. "Shark Finning." September 2003.