



SHARK FIN & RAY TRADE



THE ISSUE

Sharks and rays are in crisis, with a quarter of the 1,000+ sharks and related species threatened with extinction. Overfishing is the primary threat to sharks and rays, with up to 100 million animals killed every year. Populations continue to decline in many parts of the world, and in March 2019, the Shark Specialist Group (SSG) of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) released updated Red List Assessments and found that more species are at risk, while species like short fin mako and long fin mako have been upgraded to Endangered. Conservation action is urgently needed.

Sharks mature late, have long gestation periods and relatively few offspring compared with bony fishes. This unique biology means they are particularly vulnerable to overfishing. Unfortunately, demand for shark products including fin and meat, both nationally and internationally; poor fisheries management; and trade; have resulted in more sharks threatened with extinction.

Only a handful of countries currently manage their shark fisheries sustainably, and are actively working to rebuild depleted populations. Momentum is building to conserve sharks, and more species are now protected on a national level, or by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Despite this, unreported and unregulated shark fisheries are not uncommon.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

“Sharks: Restoring the Balance”, a global program to conserve sharks and rays, run in collaboration with TRAFFIC, tackles the crisis with three main strategies:

- discouraging consumption of shark and ray products from unsustainable fisheries;
- supporting the introduction of responsible fisheries management, and;
- promoting responsible trade practices. Our responsible management approaches in more than 10 countries span everything from sustainable shark tourism to the reduction of bycatch with innovative technology.

Hong Kong accounts for about 40% of global shark fin trade annually, with the international trade of some shark species regulated. Though Hong Kong shark fin imports halved since 2007, it is legal to consume shark fin in the city. Since shark fins found in Hong Kong are all from unsustainable sources, we urgently needed to conserve sharks by focusing our attention on trade and consumption. In addition, we work to promote banning the carriage of fins from international shipping and airline companies, to block supply lines. As of today, shipping companies accounting for over 80% of the global shark fin trade have stopped shark fin carriage.

WWF-Hong Kong also engages restaurants to ban shark fin, and corporations to stop consuming it, by implementing a No Shark Fin corporate pledge. A recent consumption survey indicated that weddings remain a common occasion for shark fin consumption, making it essential for them to stop serving shark fin banquet menus

Same as sharks, many ray species are threatened with extinction. According to the IUCN redlist (as of March 2019), 120 out of 578 assessed ray species are listed as Critically

Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable. In China, gill plates of manta and devil rays are used in traditional Chinese medicine. Unfortunately, these species have very low reproduction rate. Increasing international trade in gill plate of manta rays and devil rays has led to the expansion of unsustainable fisheries. WWF-Hong Kong plans to launch a public awareness campaign on rays.

OUR ASK

According to Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department, the seizure value of shark fin was HK\$363,041 in 2018. The majority of shark fin cases were detected from incoming sea cargo arriving from the UAE, Kenya and Madagascar. To further deter the illicit trade, WWF-Hong Kong is urging the government to treat wildlife crime as a serious crime. Wildlife smuggling should be included under Schedule 1 of the Organized and Serious Crimes Ordinance (OSCO) to further deter transnational criminal enterprises that use Hong Kong as a hub for illegal wildlife trade. The government must strictly implement CITES, ensuring that the relevant regulations are effectively and comprehensively enforced in ports and in businesses.

WWF-Hong Kong urges stakeholders to say no to shark fin before it's too late. Only by working together with our partners and network offices to monitor the management, trade and consumption, can Hong Kong become a shark fin-free city.