



Photo: Jim Abernathy

### **THRESHER AND MAKO SHARKS ARE THREATENED SPECIES --**

**UNSUSTAINABLE AND UNHEALTHY**  
Targeting Thresher, Mako and other large shark species for food is *unsustainable* and many species are *threatened* as a result.

Thresher Sharks and Mako Sharks are both listed on the internationally respected IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as '*Vulnerable*', which is defined as '*High Risk of Extinction*'.

Because of the extreme vulnerability of these animals, the US recently proposed the Shortfin Mako for international protection under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species).

And Spain, the largest shark fishing nation in the world, has prohibited harvest of Thresher Sharks, because of their numbers have been so severely depleted.

Like many large sharks, Threshers and Makos take over ten years to reach reproductive age, have long - one year plus - gestation periods, and give birth to only 2 to 4 live pups. They do not 'spawn' like other fish and cannot handle directed fishing pressure.

And as large, top of the food chain predators, they contain the highest levels of mercury! One medium sized serving of mako shark for a 150 pound person contains greater than 4 times the maximum mercury intake considered 'safe' by the EPA.



### **SHARKS ARE DANGEROUS..... IF YOU EAT THEM**

Large predatory sharks are long-lived and at the top of the food chain. As such they accumulate enormous amounts of mercury and other contaminants, which have been proven to be dangerous to human health. This is why the U.S. FDA, the EPA, the Environmental Defense Fund, Seafood Watch, and many regional health authorities carry warnings regarding consumption of shark. In fact the Florida DOH advises that EVERYONE should avoid eating meat from ALL sharks over 43 inches from ALL Florida waters.

Mercury is absorbed by all marine animals and accumulates exponentially on the way up the food chain. Large predators, like sharks, can have concentrations of mercury that are 10,000 times higher than their surrounding waters. Mercury in fish cannot be trimmed off or destroyed by cooking.

Mercury is a dangerous neurotoxin to humans, and is especially harmful to children and pregnant women. Even in low doses, it can interfere with a child's brain development. In adults mercury affects fertility, blood pressure regulation, is linked to increased risk of heart disease, and causes a host of neurological problems including memory loss and chronic fatigue.

# HEALTHY OCEANS NEED SHARKS



### **SHARK SAFE NETWORK SUPPORTS SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD**

The shark species most commonly found in grocery stores and on restaurant menus are Thresher and Mako. Both are Threatened Species at High Risk of Extinction. And as top of the food chain predators, these sharks contain extremely high levels of mercury.

The Seafood Watch Guide to Sustainable Seafood lists Shark in the **AVOID** column with an extra warning for high mercury contamination.

Shark populations are being decimated at an alarming rate, and many species are on the brink of extinction. Sharks play a key role in maintaining the delicate balance of our ocean ecosystems. Without them the oceans will die. One third of our planet's oxygen and one sixth the protein that feeds the world comes from the oceans.

We need the oceans and the oceans need sharks. If you care about the future of the planet, please choose sustainable seafood!

Contact Shark Safe Network

E-mail: [info@sharksafenetwork.com](mailto:info@sharksafenetwork.com)

# Sharks Are In Trouble



## WHY DO HEALTHY OCEANS NEED SHARKS?

As apex predators, sharks are absolutely vital to the ocean's ecosystems. They maintain the balance in the oceans, and without sharks the oceans die. Sharks help to regulate the abundance, distribution and diversity of other marine animals. They also remove the sick and weak from fish populations making the gene pools stronger for these species and preventing devastating disease outbreaks. As the number of large sharks declines, the oceans will suffer unpredictable and devastating consequences.

Scientific studies show that ecosystems with healthy populations of sharks have greater biodiversity, larger numbers of fish and healthier sea grass beds as compared to similar systems in which the sharks have been overfished.

Other studies document the consequences of the loss of sharks, ranging from the decline of coral reef systems in the Caribbean to the collapse of the century old scallop fishery in the Mid-Atlantic.

And the full ramifications are still not known. In fact there is increasing alarm among scientists regarding how the loss of sharks may affect the oceans as the great lungs of the earth. Phytoplankton are the micro-plants of the ocean that represent the biggest quantity of vegetation on the planet. Phytoplankton consume more carbon dioxide than all the trees in our forests and produce most of the oxygen we breathe. Without sharks to keep the system in balance, will phytoplankton go the way of the North Carolina's scallops?

## SHARKS FACE THE THREAT OF EXTINCTION IN EVERY PART OF THE WORLD DUE TO OVERFISHING

Over 100 million sharks are killed each year, and they are not able to reproduce fast enough to keep up with this level of fishing pressure. Most of the overfishing is driven by the high demand for shark fins for shark fin soup - an Asian delicacy - but it is also due to unintended bycatch from other fisheries and recreational shark fishing.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) conducts assessments of plant and animal species at risk of extinction. In 2008, the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species listed 50 shark species as being at high risk of extinction (Critically Endangered, Endangered, or Vulnerable). Another 63 shark species are approaching threatened status (Conservation Dependent or Near Threatened). Many other shark species are listed as Data Deficient since there is not enough information available to assess their population numbers.

To compound the problem of extreme fishing pressure, sharks reproduce very slowly. They take many years to reach maturity - up to 20 years for some species - have long gestation periods and give birth to relatively few pups.

Complicating matters further is man's fear and ignorance of sharks, which results in people either not caring about sharks or thinking that it is a good thing to kill them.

The media perpetuates this fear and misunderstanding through sensational programming and hyped up news coverage. The media generally portray sharks as vicious man-eaters, when in fact only 1 person on average per year is killed by a shark in the US. And almost all shark attacks are cases of mistaken identity.

To put this into perspective, the number of people in the US who die from being struck by

lightning is 47 per year and the number of people who drown is 3,306. There are actually more deaths on US beaches from people being smothered by collapsing sand holes than from shark bites! And meanwhile people are killing over 100 million sharks every year!!!!

Sharks have inhabited our oceans for over 400 million years and in less than two decades man has brought them to the brink of annihilation. This over-exploitation of sharks must stop or our oceans will die along with the shark!

Some text provided by [www.sharksavers.org](http://www.sharksavers.org) and [www.shark.ch](http://www.shark.ch). Live shark photos by Mary O'Malley.



100 MILLION SHARKS ARE KILLED EVERY YEAR

