

SSN Sharks

Spring 2015, Issue 3



The Species Survival Network Shark Working Group is pleased to provide to you the third issue of SSN Sharks, a publication regarding sharks, rays, and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Results from Our Latest International Workshops

Summary of Shark Implementation Workshop in Colombia:

This international workshop, held in Santa Marta, Colombia on 25-27 November 2014, focused on the implementation of measures regulating the international trade in five shark species that were included in the Appendices of CITES at the 16th Conference of the Parties (CoP16) held in Bangkok, Thailand in 2013. This workshop was hosted by the Government of Colombia with support from the CITES Secretariat and the government of the United States and with technical assistance from Conservation International, Defenders of Wildlife, Humane Society International and the Pew Charitable Trusts. More than 60 participants representing over 20 countries attended the workshop. Attendees identified actions needed to effectively monitor and control the trade of CITES-listed shark products and to develop strategies for making Non-Detriment Findings (NDFs) for these species.



iSharkFin is here!

In February 2015, the FAO announced the official launch of [iSharkFin](#), an expert system for the identification of shark species from a photo of a fin. This tool will help with implementation of the CITES shark and ray listings and to combat illegal trade from sharks taken in waters where certain or all species of sharks are fully protected. The tool can be used by traders, port authorities, customs officials, researchers and scientists. All you need is a digital camera, the software and a fin.

Further details including how to download and use the system can be found on the [FAO Fisheries web page](#).

CITES Notification of Interest

No. 2013/054 regarding a [New section](#) on sharks and rays on the CITES website:

Beginning on 14 September 2014, Parties must regulate international trade in the oceanic whitetip shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*), scalloped hammerhead shark (*Sphyrna lewini*), great hammerhead shark (*S. mokarran*), smooth hammerhead shark (*S. zigaena*), porbeagle shark (*Lamna nasus*) and manta rays (*Manta* spp.). (22 November 2013).

[Useful link for the implementation of the shark and ray listings](#)

2015 – 2016 CITES Calendar

11 – 15 May: 6th meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the [Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission](#) (IATTC)

30 August – 3 September: 28th meeting of the [CITES Animals Committee](#), Tel Aviv, Israel

9 – 16 November: 24th regular meeting of the [International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas](#) (ICCAT), Malta

11 – 15 January 2016: 66th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee, CICG, Geneva, Switzerland

1 June 2016: FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), 32nd session, Rome, Italy

Other shark implementation workshops:

Oceania

[Fiji](#), Feb. 11-12, 2014 for Oceania region

Central America

Puntarenas, Costa Rica in March 2015

Latin America and the Caribbean

[Colombia](#), Nov. 25-27, 2014 for Latin America and the Caribbean but other countries invited as well

Multiple domestic workshops including at least one each in Costa Rica, Panama and Peru

Africa

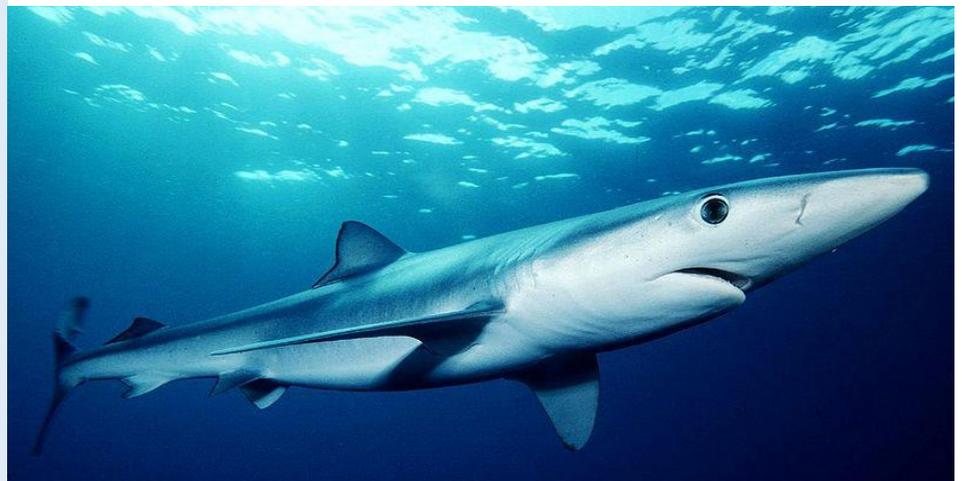
[Senegal](#), Aug. 12-14, 2014 for West Africa

One to be scheduled in West Africa that was put on hold due to the Ebola crisis

Asia

[India](#), August 26-28, 2014 for Bay of Bengal countries

[Sri Lanka](#), July 30-31, 2014 for South Asia



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Regulation Updates



COSTA RICA:

Shark fin exports halted until administration improves processes.

A [10 March 2015 article](#) reported that, after much controversy, Costa Rica's Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE) stopped issuing permits for shark fin exports until the government develops processes for NDFs consistent with what is required by CITES.

GUINEA-BISSAU:

Government takes step to ban shark finning.

A [22 January 2015 article](#) reported that Guinea-Bissau's Secretary of State for Fisheries began a campaign to ban shark finning in Guinea-Bissau waters by holding a seminar and meeting with the country's fishing delegates.

INDIA:

Jet Airways bans shark fin shipments.

A [7 November 2014 article](#) reported that Jet Airways will no longer ship shark fins, joining other airlines, including Emirates, Philippines Airlines, Korean Airlines, Asiana Airlines, Qantas, and Air New Zealand that also ban the shipment of shark fins. India is one of the world's largest exporters of shark fins, primarily shipping to Hong Kong, Dubai, and China.

MEXICO:

Government publishes draft amendment for sustainable fishing of sharks and rays.

A [12 February 2015 article](#) reported that Mexico's Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (SAGARPA) published a draft amendment for the conservation and sustainable fishing of sharks and rays. The Fifth Ordinary Session of the National Advisory Committee on Agri-Food Standardization adopted the draft amendment, which was also available for public comment. The new regulation would apply to fishing permits, licenses, authorizations, as well as bycatch of sharks and rays.



Regulation Updates

UNITED STATES:

Task force releases new action plan to combat illegal fishing.

A [15 March 2015 article](#) reported that President Obama's Task Force on Combatting Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and Seafood Fraud released an action plan that emphasizes the importance of international agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) currently being negotiated and the Port State Measures Agreement. The action plan also promotes sustainable fisheries management and conserving sharks and other threatened marine species.

American Airlines will not transport shark fins.

A [7 April 2015 article](#) reported that American Airlines announced on Twitter that it will join more than 30 other transportation companies in banning the transport of shark fins in their cargo. This announcement was made in response to requests made by local conservation organizations, Pretoma, and the Turtle Island Restoration Network, following the export of two shipments of shark fins of species listed in CITES from Costa Rica. The exports were authorized by the National System of Conservation Areas without the corresponding permits and were shipped by air to Hong Kong via the United States.



INTERNATIONAL:

Despite increased regulations, sharks still need greater protections against bycatch and overfishing.

A [31 March 2015 article](#) reported that over the past two years, China, Hong Kong, and Malaysia have banned shark fin soup at government functions, five hotel chains have banned serving shark fin soup, and 26 airlines have banned transporting fins. Finning is banned in Trinidad-Tobago, New Zealand, United Arab Emirates, Australia, India, the US, the Dominican Republic, all of Central America, and the European Union, and other nations, totaling over one hundred countries. In India, South Africa, Mexico, Canada, Argentina, the EU, and the US, sharks must be landed with fins attached. Cook Islands, Brunei, Bahamas, Northern Mariana Islands, Egypt, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Marshall Islands, and in the United States, the states of Massachusetts, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington, Illinois, California, Maryland, New York, and Delaware have banned shark fin trade. Porbeagle, oceanic whitetip, and great, smooth, and scalloped hammerhead sharks are protected under CITES. Silky sharks, two species of hammerheads, and all species of thresher sharks are protected under Appendix II of CMS. 205 marinas and 103 businesses worldwide have signed the international "Shark Friendly" initiative, discouraging offloading dead sharks.

National News

AUSTRALIA:

Sharks face stigma in media perception.

A [14 September 2014 article](#) reported that a National Geographic report showed about 100 million sharks were killed in 2013 due not only to demand for shark products but also in response to fear of sharks. There are only about five shark related fatalities each year, yet the media amplifies each death, and movies like “Jaws” only fuel a negative image of sharks.



GABON:

80 kg of shark fins confiscated.

A [30 November 2014 article](#) reported that police arrested two Nigerian fishermen and confiscated 80 kg of shark fins in Gabon.

COSTA RICA:

Illegal shark fins seized at airport.

A [25 November 2014 article](#) reported that National Animal Health Service (SENASA) officials seized illegal shark fins of protected species, including oceanic whitetip and hammerheads, *en route* to Hong Kong at Costa Rican airport. Because shark fins must go through several steps of inspection before arriving at an airport, the discovery sheds light on weaknesses and loopholes in monitoring and enforcement from the docks to the processing plants.

Administration approves export of 411 kg of shark fins.

A [19 March 2015 article](#) reported that the Costa Rican Fisheries Institute (INCOPECSA) successfully proposed a “temporary” non-detriment finding (NDF) for the export of 411 kg of shark fins, claiming a “moderate” 59 sharks impacted. However, given shark fins lose about 60% of their weight by the time of export, the amount exported is closer to 1,000 kg of fresh fins, impacting about 1,000 adult sharks. As tension over the illegal fishing scandal mounted, Randall Arauz, a marine biologist with the conservation group Pretoma, advocated that the government ban the killing of endangered hammerhead sharks until the Costa Rican Environment Ministry can finalize its NDF criteria.



National News

INDONESIA:

Sharks become valuable bycatch for tuna fisheries.

A [15 September 2014 article](#) reported that more than 33,000 purse seiners operate in Indonesia, the world's largest tuna producer. Indonesia also catches about 109,000 tons of sharks annually, largely a bycatch from the tuna fisheries. In addition to demand for shark fins, local communities also eat shark meat, including baby sharks, which is detrimental to species that have a long reproductive cycle. In 2013, the Indonesian ministry of marine affairs and fisheries began an onboard observer program, training 150 officers to monitor compliance and record bycatch data. Indonesia also uses "I-Fish," the United States technology, which increases transparency and coordination of information and data between the government and the fishing industry. Raja Ampat and West Manggarai are shark sanctuaries, and in 2014, the Indonesian government declared the entire country a manta sanctuary. More protections are needed in Indonesia if only for the pragmatic economic one that even a single shark is worth about \$1.9 million in tourism over its lifetime.

Officials make four arrests for illegal trade of shark and ray products.

A [1 October 2014 article](#) reported that from August 22nd to September 26th, Indonesia's Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) made its first four arrests for illegal trade of protected shark and ray species. Indonesia operates the world's largest shark and ray fisheries, but in February 2014, MMAF banned the hunting and trade of manta rays throughout the country, with a maximum fine of \$25,000. However, due to the products' high value, illegal and unregulated trade persists.

Government sinks poaching vessel loaded with shark fins.

A [15 February 2015 article](#) reported that the Indonesian government sunk a Vietnamese vessel loaded with two tons of poached shark fins in Raja Ampat. The illegal operation would have had to kill thousands of sharks to stockpile such a high volume of fins.

MADAGASCAR:

New sanctuary for sharks established.

A [6 February 2015 article](#) reported that the Madagascar government established a new marine protection area in Antongil Bay to conserve the diverse ecosystem, home to 19 different species of sharks. In addition to the new shark sanctuary, the law also restricts international fishing in the bay, and creates "locally managed marine areas (LMMAs)," giving local communities management and use rights.

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International News

Several shark species gain protections under CITES.

A [15 September 2014 article](#) reported that five species of sharks are now protected under CITES, porbeagle, oceanic whitetip, and smooth, scalloped, and great hammerhead sharks. Sharks help maintain a balanced marine ecosystem. When shark numbers dropped along the east coast of the United States, the cownose ray population grew in population, feasting on valuable seafood such as clams and scallops, hurting local fisheries. In the absence of sharks, seagrass communities are also more susceptible to climate change. Sharks have also proven highly valuable in eco-tourism around the world, generating about \$314 million each year. Although Hong Kong imported more than 5.4 million kg of shark fins in 2013, the Hong Kong government and other member countries are working to enforce the new CITES protections through workshops and training enforcement officials.

Global shark fin trade has dropped about 25% in past decade.

A [26 February 2015 article](#) reported that a new study shows the trade of shark fins has decreased by about 25% in the past decade. Declining demand in China for shark fin soup thanks to advocacy campaigns has likely contributed to the overall decrease in trade. While the overall trade data point to good news for sharks, the number of countries participating in the shark fin trade is increasing, with over 70 countries currently participating, which complicates monitoring and enforcement.



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Useful Websites

[Species Survival Network](#)

[CITES](#)

[CITES Sharks & Manta Rays](#)

[IUCN Red List](#)

[Convention on Migratory Species \(CMS\)](#)

[International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas \(ICCAT\)](#)

[Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission \(IATTC\)](#)

[Indian Ocean Tuna Commission \(IOTC\)](#)

[Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission \(WCPFC\)](#)

[Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna \(CCSBT\)](#)