

# Sharks are in Trouble

Demand for shark's fin soup is driving the destruction of shark populations throughout the world.

Historically a Chinese delicacy reserved for the Emperor and his guests, consumption has increased along with the growing prosperity in China and other Asian communities, and has become a must-have at many weddings, business dinners and upscale banquets. That adds up to a lot of shark's fin soup and a lot of sharks being killed for it.

The fins from tens of millions sharks move through the Hong Kong shark fin markets alone each year<sup>1</sup>. Many of these sharks are caught not for their meat, but for their valuable fins. The most prized shark fins can sell for hundreds of dollars per pound<sup>2</sup>.

Across the oceans, many shark populations have already declined by 90% or more in just the last 20 years<sup>3</sup>. Compounding the problem, many shark species reproduce very slowly, taking years to reach sexual maturity and producing few young<sup>4</sup>. Many populations cannot keep up with the demands of the shark fin trade<sup>5</sup>. We must keep sharks in the oceans and out of our soup bowls.



**26-73M**  
number of sharks  
killed each year  
for their fins<sup>1</sup>.



## The Effects On Marine Life

The loss of apex predators can cause unpredictable consequences in an ecosystem<sup>6</sup>. On Caribbean reefs where sharks have been mostly fished out, groupers initially flourished. These groupers preyed heavily on parrotfish and other herbivores that kept the reefs free of algae. As these fish declined, the reefs became covered in algae and died, ultimately harming all fish species and the ecosystem as a whole.

Many scientific studies demonstrate that the depletion of shark populations results in the loss of commercially important fish species across the food chain, including key commercial species like tuna and grazing fishes that maintain the healthy coral reefs<sup>7</sup>. Sharks are 'keystone' species, meaning that removing them may cause food web collapse.

### SOURCES:

1 – Clark et al. 2006, 2 – Clarke 2004, 3 – Baum and Myers 2004, 4 – Frisk et al. 2005, 5 – Cailliet et al. 2005, 6 – Bascompote et al. 2005, 7 – Ferretti et al. 2010, 8 – Ferretti et al. 2008, 9 – Baum et al. 2003

## What Can We Do?

We can do our part by not eating shark's fin soup and encouraging our family and friends not to eat it. Contrary to myth, shark fins are not healthy and may contain heavy metals like mercury and neurotoxins linked to degenerative brain diseases..

- Take the pledge to be **FINished with FINS** and encourage friends and family to do the same
- Ask your local restaurants to remove shark fin soup from the menu
- Ask your company to stop serving shark fin soup at corporate events
- Do not serve shark fin soup at your wedding and send a "No Shark Fin Soup" RSVP to other events
- Support efforts in your community to ban shark's fin