Eric H. Cheng/SeaPics.com

OCEANIC WHITETIP SHARK *(Carcharhinus longimanus)*	
Appendix II listing	Proposed by Palau, the United States
IUCN Red List status	**Critically Endangered** in Northwest and Central Atlantic Ocean **Vulnerable** globally

RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT

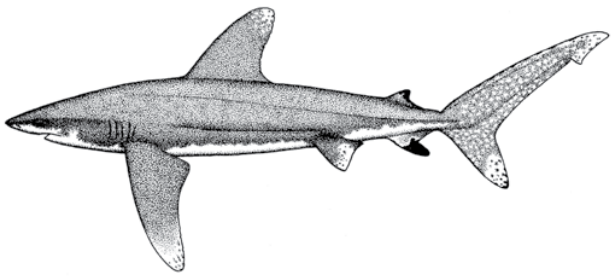
- The Pew Environment Group applauds the submission of this proposal and urges CITES Parties to support it.
- The expert panel of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) supports this listing and has declared that Proposal 16, to include the oceanic whitetip in Appendix II, is corroborated by scientific data and sufficiently meets the listing criteria.
- Oceanic whitetip sharks have experienced significant population declines in the Northwest Atlantic and the West-Central Atlantic due largely to over-exploitation fueled by a global demand for their large, high-value fins.[1]
- Despite declines, there is little to no management of trade in this species, and the scope of illegal trade is unknown.[2]
- A CITES Appendix II listing would regulate international trade in oceanic whitetip shark fins, spurring steps to sustainably manage this species.

Biological vulnerability to over-exploitation

- Long gestation period of nine to 12 months.[3]
- Low to moderate population growth rates, in comparison with other shark species.[4]
- Long reproductive periodicity, reproducing every two years.[5]
- Low reproductive capacity, with only five to six pups per litter.[6]

Oceanic whitetip fisheries and trade

The oceanic whitetip is one of the most widespread shark species and is found in all of the world's oceans.[7] Several targeted fisheries exist for oceanic whitetips, and they are frequently caught as bycatch in tuna and swordfish fisheries.[8] Although this species experiences a high catch-survival rate on longline fishing equipment, the low market value of its meat coupled with the high value and increasing demand for its fins encourages the practice of finning.[9] Fins of this species have been valued at US$45 to $85 per kilogram.[10] Thus, rather than releasing live catch or utilizing the entire shark, fishermen often remove the fins at sea and dispose of the carcass overboard. Oceanic whitetip fins are easily identifiable in trade by their white coloring, rounded shape and large size.



Oceanic whitetip shark

Alessandro De Maddalena/SeaPics.com

The size of oceanic whitetip populations is difficult to estimate, because stock assessments have not been conducted and data are generally limited.[11] However, U.S. pelagic longline surveys and observer data in the Gulf of Mexico have estimated a decline of 99 percent over four generations for this species.[12] In the Northwest Atlantic, an analysis of U.S. pelagic longline logbook data estimated declines of up to 70 percent.[13] A similar analysis of pelagic longline surveys and observer data from the Pacific yielded a 90 percent decline in biomass.[14]

Although the United Nations lists the oceanic whitetip as a highly migratory species, little progress has been made in the adoption of international conservation measures, and international catch is inadequately monitored.[15] The Pew Environment Group recommends that Parties support this proposal and looks forward to providing assistance and collaboration in its implementation.

Including oceanic whitetips in Appendix II is:

- Consistent with Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) listing criteria (Res. Conf. 9.24 [Rev. CoP14], Annex 2a[A]); regulating trade is necessary to avoid the future eligibility of this species for an Appendix I listing.
- Necessary to ensure that international trade is regulated sustainably.
- Likely to spark enhanced assessment and management of populations worldwide as countries will need to make non-detriment findings before issuing permits for international trade.
- Necessary to end the serial population depletion driven by international trade.
- In line with the FAO International Plan of Action for sharks.

1 CITES, Proposal 16, <www.cites.org/eng/cop/15/prop/E-15%20Prop-16.pdf>. Downloaded 28 December 2009. J. Baum *et al.*, Carcharhinus longimanus. In: IUCN 2009, IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, Version 2009.2,<www.iucnredlist.org>. Downloaded 11 December 2009.

2 CITES.

3 T. Seki *et al.*, "Age, growth and reproduction of the oceanic whitetip shark from the Pacific Ocean," *Fisheries Science*, 64:14–20 (1998).

4 E. Cortés, "Comparative life history and demography of pelagic sharks." In: Sharks of the Open Ocean: Biology, Fisheries and Conservation (M. D. Camhi, E. K. Pikitch and E. A. Babcock, eds.). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2008, pp. 309–22.

5 Seki, pp. 14–20.

6 *Ibid.*

7 R. H. Backus *et al.*, "A contribution to the natural history of the white-tip shark, Pterolamiops longimanus (Poey)," *Deep-Sea Research*, 3:176–88 (1956), <www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B757G-48B0PR9-3F&_user=10&_rdoc=1&_fmt=&_orig=search&_sort=d&_docanchor=&view=c&_acct=C000050221&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=10&md5=956d6834400c8d116a08800ac9ef658c>.

8 Baum.

9 L. R. Beerkircher *et al.*, "Characteristics of Shark Bycatch Observed on Pelagic Longlines Off the Southeastern United States, 1992–2000," *Marine Fisheries Review*, 64(4):40–9 (2002), <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m3089/is_4_64/ai_n6148326>.

10 S. Clarke *et al.*, "Estimates of Shark Species Composition and Numbers Associated With the Shark Fin Trade Based on Hong Kong Auction Data," *Journal of Northwest Atlantic Fishery Science*, 35:453–65 (2004), <http://journal.nafo.int/35/35.html>.

11 CITES.

12 J. K. Baum *et al.*, "Shifting baselines and the decline of pelagic sharks in the Gulf of Mexico," *Ecology Letters*, 7(3):135-45 (2004), <www.fmap.ca/ramweb/papers-total/Baum_Myers_2004.pdf>.

13 J. K. Baum *et al.*, "Collapse and conservation of shark populations in the Northwest Atlantic," *Science*, 299:389-92 (2003), <www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/299/5605/389>.

14 P. Ward and R. Myers, "Shifts in open ocean fish communities coinciding with the commencement of commercial fishing," *Ecology*, 86:835–47 (2005), <www.soest.hawaii.edu/pfrp/reprints/ecol_86_420_835_847.pdf>.

15 Baum, IUCN 2009.

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