

## ***Fast Facts:***

# **IUCN Report on Conservation Status of Open Ocean Sharks & Rays**

## **Pelagic shark fishing**

### **How?**

Open ocean (“pelagic”) sharks and rays are caught in longline, purse seine, and gillnet fisheries.

### **How much?**

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), worldwide landings of “sharks” (including rays and chimaeras) averaged about 400,000 tonnes (t) in the 1960s, increased to 630,000t in the 1980s and peaked in 2003 at about 900,000t. In 2007, 781,326t were reported, about 10% of which were pelagic species.

### **Where?**

Of the 2007 shark landings, 38% came from the Atlantic, 34% from the Pacific, and 28% from the Indian Ocean. The greatest expansion of shark fishing has occurred in the Indian Ocean.

### **Who?**

In 2007, 21 shark-fishing nations reported more than 10,000t of shark landings, with the top five - Indonesia, India, Taiwan, Spain, and Mexico - accounted for 42%. The top three countries in terms of pelagic species were Spain (23,737t reported to FAO, but more than 45,000t reported to national authorities), Indonesia (18,950t), and Portugal (12,484t), who together took 68% of the reported global pelagic shark catch.

### **What species?**

Globally, in 2007, blue sharks were the most commonly reported species, representing 56% of the pelagic shark catch (45,087t), followed by threshers at 24% (19,197t). Only 5,924t of makos were reported (7%). Pelagic mantas and devilrays were reported as a group at 3,310t.

### **Under what limits?**

Most pelagic sharks migrate across jurisdictional boundaries, but have been low priority for data collection and fishery management. Catch limits are rare at the national level and nonexistent at the international level in the face of rising demand for shark products. Shark “finning” (slicing off a shark’s fins and discarding the body at sea) has been banned in most international waters, but enforcement standards are lenient.

### **Terminology**

The pelagic sharks and rays include “oceanic” and “semipelagic” species. Oceanic species live mainly in ocean basins away from land, from near surface waters to depths of several thousand meters. Semipelagic species enter oceanic waters, but are concentrated close to land.