

SHARKS 101

1. WHAT ARE SHARKS?

There are 1,044 described Chondrichthyan species around the world, including sharks, rays, skates and chimaeras. Of this, 468 species are sharks. However, a new species of Chondrichthyan is discovered, on average, every two weeks!



Many reports (i.e. those written by our organization) use the term 'sharks' to mean all Chondrichthyan species, whereas others talk about sharks as just the Elasmobranchs.

To clarify, Chondrichthyes are Chimaeriformes (chimaeras) and Elasmobranchii (elasmobranchs) and Batoidea (batoids). Elasmobranchs are largely sharks, batoids are largely rays, but also include guitarfishes, sawfishes and coldwater skates, and chimaeras are also known as ratfishes.

2. WHICH SPECIES OF SHARK ARE TARGETED FOR THEIR FINS?

This is a difficult question to answer. Most sharks and rays are caught by fishing operations that are targeting other more valuable fish species but get caught by the often indiscriminate fishing gears (longlines, trawls). Therefore, most sharks are caught as bycatch, but their fins make them very valuable.

It is hard to say which species are taken by the finning industry. Scientific studies have carried out genetic and market surveys to determine which species are for sale but this has only been in certain markets in certain areas of the world. More information can be found [here](#).



3. HOW MANY SHARKS A YEAR ARE KILLED FOR THEIR FINS?

This number is hard to estimate, however a study released by Clarke et al. (2002) estimates that between 26 and 73 million sharks are killed each year.

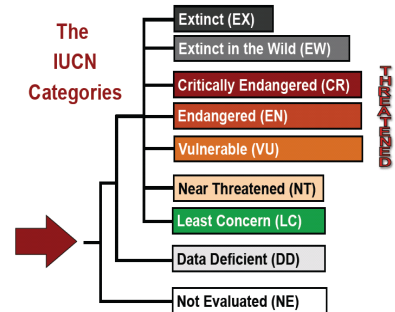
Mission: to promote the long-term conservation of the world's sharks and related species, effective management of their fisheries and habitats, and, where necessary, the recovery of their populations.

4. HAVE ANY SPECIES OF SHARK BECOME EXTINCT THROUGH THE IMPACTS OF FISHING?

To our knowledge, no sharks have become extinct globally due to industrial scale fishing. However, there are some populations of species that have become locally extinct. For examples see [Dulvy et al. 2003](#); [Dulvy and Forrest 2009](#).

5. HOW DOES THE IUCN CLASSIFICATIONS SCHEME WORK?

The IUCN Red List uses the following classifications (must be capitalized) to describe the threat status of a species: Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable - these three are the categories people talk about when they say a species is 'Threatened'. The other three classifications are: Near Threatened, Least Concern and Data Deficient. These classifications follow strict IUCN Red List guidelines including rate of population decline, numbers in the wild, size of area that they are present in and threats that the species may face. Please go to www.iucnredlist.org for more information.



Nearly half of all Chondrichthyan species are Data Deficient. This means that we don't have enough information on them to make a classification. However, there is quite a large chance that these species are Threatened to some degree as many are described from only one specimen!

Threat status of Chondrichthyans and Elasmobranchs

	Red List Category	Chondrichthyans (Sharks and their relatives)	Elasmobranchs (Sharks)
Threatened	Critically Endangered	25	11
	Endangered	42	15
	Vulnerable	114	48
	Near Threatened	134	69
	Least Concern	241	115
	Data Deficient	488	210
	Total	1044	468

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