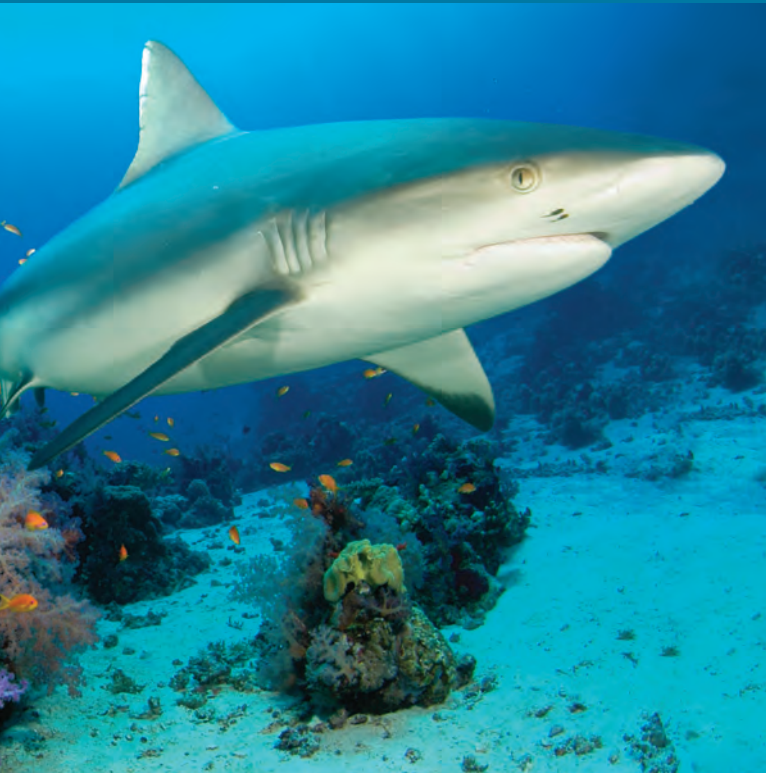




[ Protect Sharks and Marine Ecosystems ]



# Say No to Shark Fin Soup



**HUMANE SOCIETY**  
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## THE HIGH COSTS OF SHARK FINNING

Every year, tens of millions of sharks are killed to meet the demand for shark fin soup, a popular Chinese delicacy. The fins are often sliced off while the sharks are still alive; their bodies are then thrown back into the water as the sharks endure a painful death from suffocation, blood loss, or predation by other species.

Sharks have existed for 400 million years, but over the last half a century, the growing demand for shark fins in Asia has led to drastic declines in their populations. One-third of pelagic shark species are now threatened with extinction. Sharks are particularly vulnerable to such threats because most mature slowly, have long gestation periods, and produce few young. This makes shark populations, once depleted, very slow to recover, if they recover at all.

The impact of shark finning goes beyond the sharks themselves. Sharks are apex predators who play an essential role in marine ecosystems, and studies have shown that massive depletion of large sharks has a cascading effect on the oceans. Such depletion leads to an abundance of sharks' prey, which in turn threatens the populations of species at the bottom of the marine food chain, such as bay scallops.

## MOUNTING EXPLOITATION

Sharks are finned to maximize profit. If a fishing crew takes a whole shark, the boat soon runs out of freezer space. If the crew takes only the valuable fins and discards the rest of the shark, it can use the freezer space to store higher-value fish. The crew can continue to fish, killing a massive—and unsustainable—number of sharks.

Shark fin soup can sell for as much as \$100 per bowl, but now there is a growing mass market for lower-grade shark fin products. The soup, once consumed only by Chinese emperors and the very elite, is now served at Lunar New Year events, weddings, and other celebrations. This expanding availability is driving an increase in the practice of shark finning.

Ironically, shark fin itself is tasteless. The flavor of the soup primarily comes from other ingredients, such as the addition of chicken or ham strips. Research indi-



Species such as blue sharks, hammerheads (pictured), and oceanic white tip sharks have high-value fins for shark fin soup, making them particularly vulnerable to the threat from shark finning.

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cates that some shark fins contain mercury—a neurotoxin that can cause extensive damage to the nervous system and to fetuses—in an amount that far exceeds the recommended level for safe consumption.

## YOU CAN HELP

Don't let a brief moment of pleasure make you complicit in the extinction of sharks. You can help save sharks and protect ocean ecosystems by deciding to stop consuming shark fin soup or by requesting restaurants to stop serving it. To learn more, visit [hsi.org/sharkfin](http://hsi.org/sharkfin).

## PROTECTING ANIMALS WORLDWIDE

For more information about Humane Society International, visit [hsi.org](http://hsi.org). Humane Society International extends the mission and work of The Humane Society of the United States, one of the largest animal welfare organizations in the world, backed by more than 11 million supporters.



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