ROAD TO RECOVERY

SHARKS & RAYS

CoP17: APPENDIX II

SPECIES IN CRITICAL DECLINE

In 2013, in the face of global declines, the oceanic whitetip, three species of hammerhead, porbeagle sharks, and both species of manta ray were listed on Appendix II of CITES. Since that time, both governments and non-governmental organizations across the world have worked tirelessly to ensure that the implementation of these listings has been successful through strong domestic action underpinned by a series of trainings and capacity building workshops.

However, declines in shark and ray populations have not been limited to the previously listed species: silky sharks, thresher sharks, and mobula rays have also suffered similar declines across their respective ranges driven by unsustainable international trade.

Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) measures and domestic fisheries management of these species are piecemeal, and fails to cover large parts of their range. Due to inadequate management measures, poor enforcement of the measures that do exist, and a lack of control over the level or sustainability of international trade, **silky sharks, thresher sharks, and mobula rays have all suffered declines of over 70% across their range, and in some areas up to 99%.**

Sharks help maintain balance in marine ecosystems. When their populations decline, unpredictable consequences in the ocean environment may result, including the possible collapse of commercially important fisheries.

Additionally, tourism such as recreational diving or snorkeling with sharks and rays is typically more sustainable and often more lucrative than shark and ray fishing and trade. For example, the estimated lifetime value of a reef shark to the tourism industry in Palau is US$1.9 million while the same reef shark is worth US$108 if caught and killed.

APPENDIX II LISTING

VOTE YES APPENDIX II ✓

An Appendix II listing could be the difference between recovery and extinction for these crucial species. Vote YES to list silky sharks, threshers, and mobula rays on Appendix II of CITES.

An Appendix II listing for these species will ensure that international trade is supplied by sustainably managed, and accurately recorded fisheries that are not detrimental to the status of the wild populations they exploit. **Trade controls under CITES will encourage comprehensive management for these species, and preserve their populations for generations to come.**

These listings can be implemented using all of the tools, trainings and techniques developed in response to the 2013 shark and ray listings, allowing straightforward implementation and enforcement of these new listings for all CITES Parties.

BIGEYE THRESHER SHARK
(*ALOPIAS SUPERCILIOSUS*, AND *A. PELAGICUS* AND *A. VULPINUS* AS LOOK-ALIKE SPECIES)

Sponsors: Sri Lanka, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Comoros, Dominican Republic, Egypt, European Union and its Member States, Fiji, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Maldives, Mauritania, Palau, Panama, Samoa, Senegal, Seychelles, Ukraine, and United Arab Emirates

In a 2014 study, *Alopias* spp. were identified as the most vulnerable to extinction of all pelagic shark families due to their slow life history and lack of global management.[viii] High levels of fishing pressure have led to the rapid declines of thresher shark populations around the world. Thresher sharks are frequently and unsustainably caught in offshore tuna and swordfish long-line and gill-net fisheries, and are also targeted in some parts of their range.

The Hong Kong shark fin market provides the best data against which to assess trends in international trade in shark products. In the early 2000s, thresher shark species made up 2.0-2.7% of the fins in trade.[ix] By 2015, this had fallen rapidly to some 0.03-0.53% of the sharks in the Hong Kong fin market.[vii] This is a 77-99% decline in thresher shark fins in trade. With a lack of management through much of the species' range and inadequate enforcement of the limited management measures that do exist, this is almost certainly due to crashing thresher shark populations.

ESTIMATED THRESHER STOCK DECLINE [i-vi]
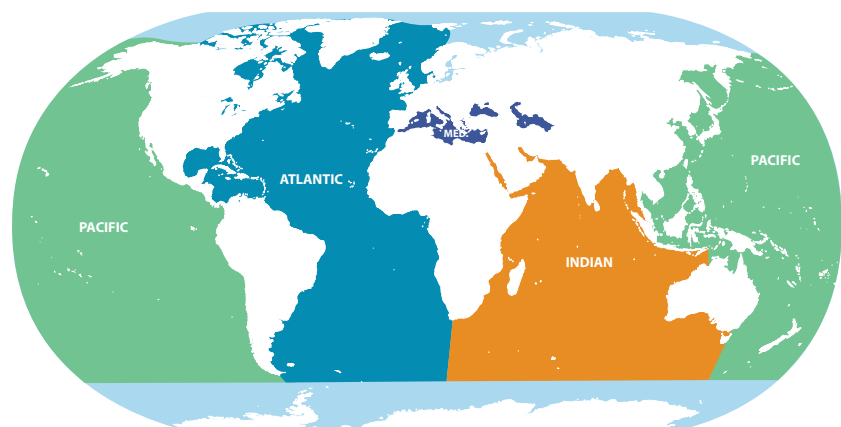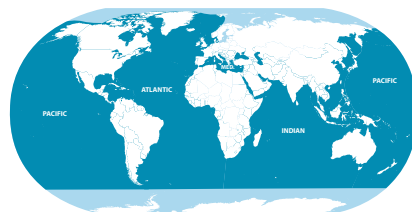
▼ **83%** PACIFIC: *over the last three generation periods*

▼ **70-80%** ATLANTIC: *(dependent on sub-region) over the last 30 years*

▼ **99%** MEDITERRANEAN

▼ **88%** INDIAN: *88% over the last 20 years*

APPENDIX II LISTING

This listing would assist in preventing further declines and allow this species to recover.

GLOBALLY:

▼ **77-99%**

decline in proportion of threshers in the Hong Kong shark fin market in the last 10-15 years

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SILKY SHARK
(*CARCHARHINUS FALCIFORMIS*)

Silky sharks are one of the most commonly caught shark species in tuna long-line and purse seine fishing gear.

As the use of fish aggregating devices (FADs) by purse seiners has increased, so has the mortality of silky sharks – in the Indian Ocean up to 960,000 are estimated to be killed each year due to entanglement in FAD netting alone.[xvi, xvii] In the only region where a full stock assessment has been possible, the western and central Pacific Ocean, the species had declined so far that all retention was prohibited.

Sponsors: The Maldives, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Comoros, Dominican Republic, Egypt, European Union and its Member States, Fiji, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Palau, Panama, Samoa, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, and United Arab Emirates

APPENDIX II LISTING

This listing would ensure that international trade would be maintained at sustainable levels.

ESTIMATED SILKY STOCK DECLINE [i, ii, x-xv]
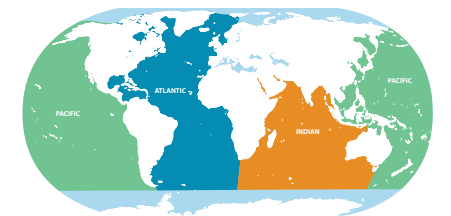
▼ **60-80%** PACIFIC: *between 1994 & 2004, sub-region dependent*

▼ **67%** PACIFIC: *in <20 years; 70% from baseline*

▼ **72%** ATLANTIC: *over 5 years*

▼ **69%** ATLANTIC: *over 10-20 years*

▼ **90%** ATLANTIC: *over 40 years from 1950s*

▼ **50-90%** INDIAN: *over 20 years*

MOBULA RAYS
(GENUS *MOBULA*)

Mobula rays are one of the least fecund elasmobranchs in the ocean, having only one pup every two to three years.

Mobulas are migratory and may be encountered in both shallow inshore and deeper offshore environments in tropical and temperate waters throughout the world. The schooling behavior exhibited by some species make them highly vulnerable to anthropogenic exploitation, while their small and dispersed populations and low productivity limit their ability to recover from a depleted state.

Sponsors: Fiji, Bangladesh, Bahamas, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Comoros, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, The European Union and its Member States, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Maldives, Mauritania, Palau, Panama, Samoa, Senegal, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates, and United States of America

APPENDIX II LISTING

Targeted for their gill plates, which are dried and exported, this listing would manage trade at sustainable levels, and additionally complement the existing *Manta* spp. listing.
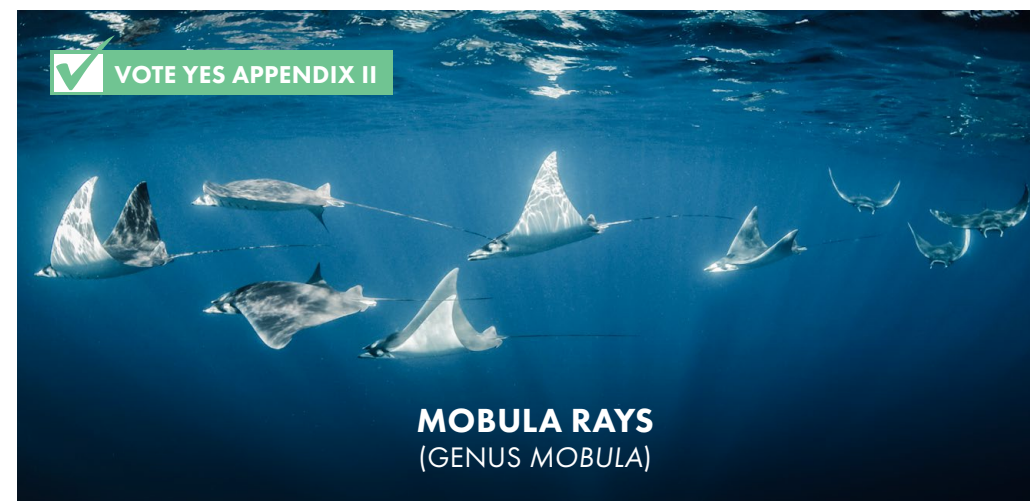
ESTIMATED MOBULA STOCK DECLINE [xviii-xxv]

▼ **50-99%** INDO PACIFIC: *over 7-13 years*

▼ **89%** PACIFIC: *off Peru over 14 years*

▼ **61%** ATLANTIC: *over 4 years*

▼ **>50%** INDIAN: *over 9 years*

ENFORCEMENT OF NEW LISTINGS

As with the listings in 2013, tools and resources are already available for countries to properly implement the listings of these new species. Both a genetic and visual identification guide have been created for customs, fisheries, and environment officials to recognize these highly distinctive species in their most commonly traded form: dried and unprocessed fins and gill plates.

THRESHER SHARKS

The key diagnostic character for bigeye thresher and its look-alike species, the common and pelagic threshers, is that the ventral surface of the pectoral fin has little to no counter shading unlike other shark species.

SILKY SHARKS

Silky shark first dorsal fins are uniform in color, with a sloping leading edge, a moderately rounded (as opposed to pointed) apex, and a strongly convex (outwardly rounded) trailing edge. The free rear tip is close to half the length of the base. The color is gray. The texture of the fins are also much smoother than other shark species.

MOBULA RAYS

The spinetail devil ray (*Mobula japanica*) and the sicklefin devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*), along with the seven look-alike species, can be identified by gill plates that are mostly under 30 cm in length, and either bi-colored and/or separated bristled or pointed filament edging.

ADDITIONAL INFO

For more information or additional guides, see *Identifying Shark Fins: Silky and Threshers*, *Field Identification Guide of the Prebranchial Appendages (Gill Plates) of Mobulid Rays*, and **www.pewtrusts.org/cites2016.**

In addition to the visual and genetic guides, a dedicated portal has been set up on the CITES website to help CITES Parties and stakeholders to share shark information. This includes a shark identification materials database, guidance on how to develop NDFs, details of relevant meetings already held or upcoming, and an archive of national and regional reports, studies, posters, and multimedia. In 2014, the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and TRAFFIC produced detailed guidelines on the development of NDFs to advise governments seeking to export CITES-listed shark and ray species.

Through these publications, Parties have a multitude of tools that can be used to legally and sustainably trade these species in the same way as previously listed shark species.

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