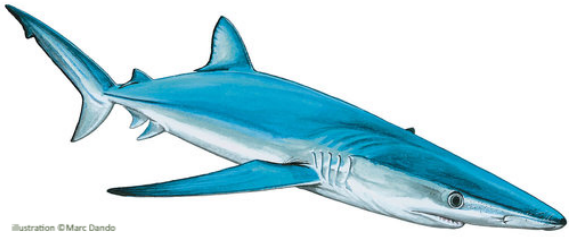
SHARK RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Blue Shark (Prionace glauca)
CITES CoP19 Prop 37 for Appendix II

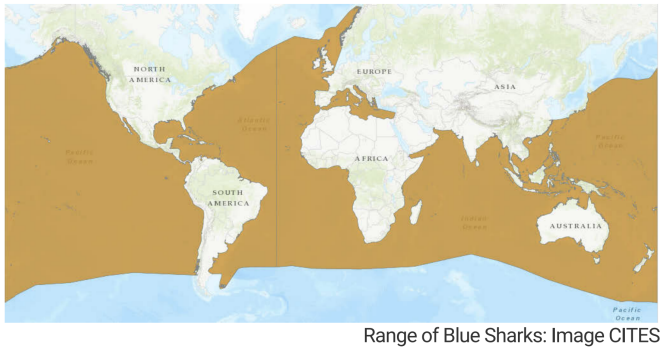


A pelagic shark with global range, blue sharks are the most-landed large shark in commercial fisheries and at 20 million/year, the most common in the shark fin trade. Although some fins are distinguishable, the small non-descript fins justify look-alike status with other Requiem sharks. We urge listing this shark with the entire family Carcharhinidae under Proposal 37, CITES Appendix II.

IUCN RED LIST - ENDANGERED w/ DECREASING POPULATION (2019) ⬇

- Since 2020, the IUCN has listed the Blue shark as Near Threatened with a decreasing population trend.[1]
- The Blue Shark is an oceanic pelagic shark that occurs close inshore where the continental shelf is narrow and is found from the surface down to depths of 1,000 m.[2, 3] It also occurs in inshore waters where the continental shelf is narrow.[2]
- In the North Atlantic, an estimated median reduction of 53.9% was evaluated over 30 years, with the highest probability of a 50–79% reduction.[5]
- In the South Atlantic, an estimated median reduction of 38.2% was found over 30 years, with the highest probability of 30–49% in population reductions.[5,6]
- Fewer than 10 of the species modeled in the Hong Kong fin trade have sustainably managed fisheries anywhere in their range, and the most common species in the fin trade, the blue shark, was not among them.[11]
- Although the pectoral fins and the dorsal fin are easily distinguishable in this species, the smaller fins resemble other Requiem sharks and can be easily confused with the fins from other Carhcarhinid sharks.[7]

- Due to uncertainty, high levels of exploitation and trade in meat and fins, expert judgment elicitation was used to estimate a global population reduction of 20–29% over the last 30 years.[1] Therefore, the Blue Shark is assessed as NT but is nearly meeting Vulnerable status.[1]
- Blue Sharks are caught globally as target and bycatch in commercial and pelagic longline, purse seine, and gillnet fisheries as well as, in industrial pelagic fleets in offshore and high seas waters.[9] They are also caught in coastal longlines, gillnets, trammel nets, and trawls, especially in areas with narrow continental shelves.[9, 10]
- Blue sharks are generally retained for the meat and fins[11, 12, 13] and is the most prevalent species in the shark fin trade estimated at 20 million/ year.[11, 13]
- The meat is often discarded but demand may be increa- sing and it is used in some regions where it is sold fresh locally and frozen or dried for international trade. [12, 14]
- It comprised 49% of shark fins imported in Hong Kong in 2014 and just under 20% from 1991-2001[12, 13] and the under-reporting of catches in the pelagic and domestic fisheries is likely.[12]



Range of Blue Sharks: Image CITES

- In the Indian Ocean an estimated median reduction of 8.4% was analyzed over 31.5 years, with the highest probability of a <20% reduction in population.[8]

- According to EUROSTAT data, of shark catches by EU fleets in the Atlantic in 2009, 69% and 72% of Spanish and Portuguese surface longline Atlantic catches, are sharks, mainly blue sharks and shortfin mako sharks.[15, 16]

- The post-release mortality of only a few pelagic shark species has been studied. It has been reported as 10–35% for the Blue Shark.[17]

- Many other studies suggest that highly migratory pelagic shark species such as the blue shark have a moderate to high risk of extinction due to vigorous fishing threats.[16]

- Blue sharks are represented in global ecotourism operations by over10%.[8]

- Shark-diving operations in the Azores off the coast of portugal and much of the Macaronesian archipelagos, began in 2011 and in 2014 gener- ated revenues of around US$2,250,000.[16, 19, 20] Blue sharks and shortfin Mako sharks are the principal attractions of this diving experience.[21]

- Implementing catch limits and species specific fishing regulations for this species would be extremely beneficial. Listing these species as protected under national and regional statuses would greatly affect conservation of blue shark populations.

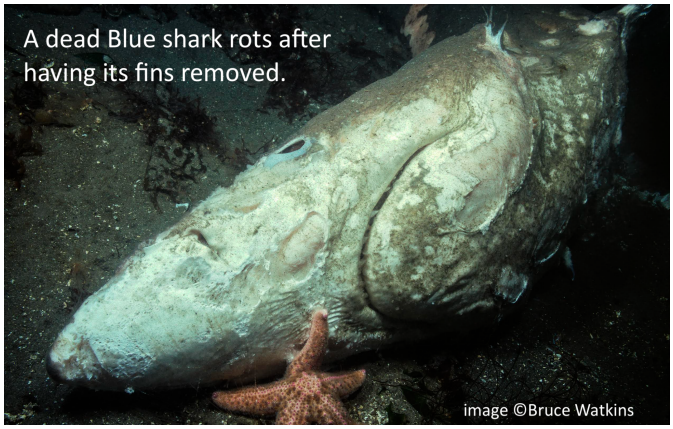

A dead Blue shark rots after having its fins removed.

image ©Bruce Watkins

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