



BITE-BACK
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ON SHARKS

In the last decade shark meat has become increasingly popular, making the transition from exclusive restaurant menus to supermarket shelves via gastro pubs and eateries, and it is this increased and widespread availability that could spell the end of the line for shark.

Demand for its meat is so high that shark is being fished to the brink of extinction. Already, some stocks of shark are close to collapse and marine scientists have raised the alarm, declaring shark as a threatened species.

In fact the problem is so acute that, according to a 10-year research study published by leading fisheries biologist, Dr Ransom Myers, 'unrelenting fishing pressure has decimated 90% of the world's stocks of sharks'.

Put very simply, too many people are eating shark and these slow to mature and long-lived fish are at the frontline of a killing spree that is so unsustainable it can only be described as an underwater holocaust.

However, Bite-Back, the UK's fastest growing marine conservation organisation, believes that retailers and restaurants can help manage the future of the world's shark populations, by making an intelligent decision about which fish they sell and when. Working together, the law of supply and demand can be turned on its head to alter the dynamics of the fishing industry and help allow stocks of shark to recover. If retailers stop selling it and consumers stop buying it, the motivation to hunt and kill shark is removed.

As a testament to this model the UK's largest retailer, ASDA, has chosen to support Bite-Back's recommendations and removed shark from its network of stores. At the same time, restaurant chains, including Wagamama have responded positively by removing shark from its menus across the country.

Graham Buckingham, campaign director at Bite-Back, said: "If ever there was a wake-up call, this has to be it. Anyone who continues to buy and sell shark is effectively endorsing its extinction."

A RISING TIDE

Bite-Back is not alone in its recommendations. Other conservation groups around the world including the Marine Conservation Society, National Audubon Society, Sea Food Choices Alliance, Blue Ocean Institute and the Monterey Bay Aquarium are also fearful for the future of shark and each believe that we should avoid eating it.

NOT ENOUGH FISH IN THE SEA

Most large sharks are slow to mature, at around seven years, and long lived at around 25 years. As an apex predator, it does not produce large litters and may only give birth to six or so pups per year. Some sharks, including the British Spiny Dogfish have gestation periods longer than an elephant.

It is therefore easy to understand how quickly that lifecycle could be unbalanced.

In 2004, 3,290 tonnes of shark was consumed in the UK – equivalent in weight to 2200 Ford Fiestas – contributing to the 100 million sharks slaughtered every year to keep up with demand.

The problem of commercial shark fishing is so out of control that marine scientist Ransom Myers

recently announced that stocks of some sharks have plummeted to just 10% of levels recorded in 1950.



Rather than recognising the problem, fishing for shark around the world continues unchecked as suppliers look elsewhere for the last remaining stocks. As a result, shark stocks in some marine reserves are being targeted to make up numbers. It is a

massive problem on a global scale. In acknowledgement, the EU Food and Agriculture Organisation recently announced that between 71 and 78% of major fish stocks in the world are depleted, over exploited or fully exploited.

WORSE THINGS HAPPEN AT SEA

Modern fishing techniques have seen the introduction of a fiercely effective but indiscriminate fishing method known as longlining. It has severely changed the future of the marine environment.

Longlining is an indiscriminate fishing practice that can involve a boat spooling around 40 miles of line with up to 40,000 baited hooks. Predominantly fishing for large pelagic fish – tuna, shark, swordfish – research now shows that the catch rate for the target species is as little as two in every 100 hooks set, with the other hooks responsible for the unintended death of seabirds, sea turtles, sharks, dolphins and sea lions. In fact, it is estimated that longline fisheries are instrumental in the death of 40,000 sea turtles and 180,000 sea birds every year.

TRADE WITH INTEGRITY

Alarming, five of the most threatened fish species in the world are readily available in the UK – shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy and monkfish.

Bite-Back, with your support, plans to change that.

Every restaurant or retailer that agrees to stop selling these fish will help raise the profile of this urgent issue, educate consumers, win the respect of customers and underpin Bite-Back's campaign to positively alter the way that the retail and fishing industries operate.

In return, Bite-Back will award partner-organisations with a unique Bite-Back accreditation and work to translate the ethical decision into valuable publicity.

HELP US REDUCE OVER FISHING OR THE FISHING WILL BE OVER

visit www.bite-back.com for more information on marine conservation



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