

## Shark Conservation in Maldives



Globally, over 100 million sharks are killed annually often as by-catch, but primarily just to satisfy the demand for shark fin soup. This unsustainable, wasteful and cruel industry, fuelled primarily by the demand for a luxury item is rapidly deleting these top predators from our oceans. The consequences of this for the whole marine environment will be disastrous. If we continue to kill the sharks at the current rate, they will extinct within just a few decades. When the demand for these items in the international market raise so does the demand in Maldivian waters.

Shark fishing is taking place illegally inside and legally outside the tourist atolls including Baa Atoll, over the last few years and is a big disappointment to our guests, many of whom visit hoping specifically to see these animals. Soneva Fushi is currently involved in a national shark conservation effort and aims to achieve a total ban on the shark fishing and export and sale of shark products. We have sent out mails and letters of concern to nearly 90 tourist resorts, 70 dive centers and approximately 300 travel agents in Maldives asking for their support for the campaign.

All six resorts in the Baa Atoll have come together to form a working group to target environmental issues. The group meets regularly and aims to help protect and conserve the Maldivian flora and fauna. The focus is particularly on sharks as keystone species on local coral reefs. A total ban on shark fishing and trade in the Maldives is targeted. This proactive group recognises how important a healthy marine environment is for the sustainable future of local communities and the tourism industry in the Maldives.

They aim to propose a nationwide ban on shark fishing in Maldives. Over the last few months the team has developed a number of awareness materials including posters and leaflets for educating local communities as well as guests. They have also initiated a series of high level talks with government authorities to convince them of detrimental effects of this to the tourism and fishing industries and authorities had expressed concern on the issue. A petition against shark fishing was developed by the team, and several resorts, dive centers and even tour operators worldwide have expressed concern on the issue to the government. As a result government has also now initiated a poster campaign targeted to local fisherman to discourage shark fishing in the Maldives. Soneva Fushi also funded a TV campaign targeted to local fisherman to educate them on the effects of shark fishing in the Maldives.

[http://www.biodiversity.mv/aec/index.php?option=com\\_expose](http://www.biodiversity.mv/aec/index.php?option=com_expose)