

Sharks at Risk in the Maldives

Fuelled by an increasing demand from Asian markets and a growing hunger for shark-fin soup in China and Hong Kong, the number of sharks deliberately killed for their meat and fins continues to rise in the Maldives, taking place illegally inside and legally outside the tourist atolls. This has resulted in a severe decline in the number of shark sightings in most 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.

The demand for shark-fin soup is at an all-time high. As affluence grows in Asia, so does the market for luxury items. One recent study estimated that fins from between 26 and 73 million sharks are traded globally each year, while reported world trade in fins has nearly tripled. During the finning process, a shark is hauled up on deck, its fins sliced off, and the animal, many times still alive, is thrown back into the sea to die a slow death. This practice is not only cruel; it is also incredibly wasteful and unsustainable and rapidly deletes these top predators from our oceans.



All photos of dried shark fins and jaws were taken in Haa Dhaal Atoll in the north of the Maldives. The finned whaleshark was spotted in early May in south Ari Atoll. The photo of the finned manta ray was taken last year in Rasdhoo Atoll.

Soneva Fushi is currently involved in a national shark conservation campaign and aims to achieve a total ban on the shark fishing and the export and sale of shark products. We have sent out emails and letters to nearly 90 tourist resorts, 70 dive centres as well as to approx. 300 travel agents in the Maldives, hoping to get their support for the campaign. Many of them have confirmed signing and sending our save-the-sharks letter to the government but more help is needed. On behalf of Sonu, emails and letters were also sent to our worldwide sales offices recently, asking them to get feedback from the tour operators and their full support.

If you feel strongly about the issue of species loss and would like to help the Maldivian shark populations, please sign the sheet on the right. We will send it to the Minister of Environment, along with the signatures of Soneva Fushi's hosts, and show him and his colleagues that we care!

