

BONNETHEAD SHARK

Support Proposal to include *Sphyrna tiburo* and other unlisted species of hammerhead sharks (Sphyrnidae) in Appendix II

Bonnethead shark (*Sphyrna tiburo*) populations are declining due to overfishing and the international shark fin trade. Consequently, the species is listed by IUCN as globally Endangered. Without global action, continual overfishing combined with other threats, including susceptibility to fishing gear entanglement and growing anthropogenically driven pressure on coastal ecosystems, is likely to lead to further declines without global action. This proposal is to list the Endangered bonnethead shark in Appendix II and, to bring the trade in these species (primarily their fins) under effective control, to include all other species (5) in the family Sphyrnidae that are not already listed in Appendix II as look-alikes.

Proponents of Listing

Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, the European Union, Panama.

Distribution and Habitat

S. tiburo is likely a species complex and is found in the Western Atlantic Ocean with distribution from Rhode Island, U.S. to Bahia in southern Brazil. In the Eastern Pacific Ocean, its range extends from southern California to Peru. *S. tiburo* inhabits an array of nearshore environments including seagrasses, mangroves, estuaries, mudflats, and coral reefs, though some species' ranges extend further into open ocean waters.

At Risk of Extinction in the Wild

S. tiburo's global population is estimated to have declined by 50-79% within the last three generations (36 years) (Pérez-Jiménez, 2014). The significant decline in the population led to *S. tiburo* being reclassified from 'Least Concern' to 'Endangered' in a recent IUCN Red list assessment (Pollom *et al.* 2020). In addition to international trade demand for fins, this species is affected by overexploitation, habitat loss, and environmental degradation due to coastal development and shrimp aquaculture. Of the look-alike species referenced in this proposal, three are classified by the IUCN Red List as Critically Endangered and one as Endangered.



Chen 2013

SPECIES: *Sphyrna tiburo* and look-alike species

FAMILY: Sphyrnidae

IUCN STATUS: Endangered

THREATS: Overfishing, shark fin trade, habitat degradation, climate change

RANGE: Western Atlantic and eastern Pacific

Habitat Degradation and Loss

S. tiburo depends on an array of nearshore environments including seagrasses, mangroves, estuaries, mudflats, and coral reefs for its survival. Human population growth and development are critical drivers of change in coastal zones and cause high pressure on these habitats (Neumann *et al.* 2015). Throughout the bonnethead shark's range, nearshore mangrove habitat is being removed or degraded by coastal development (Worthington *et al.* 2020). Shrimp aquaculture in many areas of the Eastern Central Pacific has caused degradation of important mangrove habitat that serve as nursery areas. Human activities and projects in coastal regions are reducing the carrying capacity of seagrass meadows and coral reefs for this species. Climate change also impacts coral reef habitat through acidification, leading to coral bleaching and declines in calcareous phytoplankton at the base of essential food-chains. Without change to the status quo, these pressures will contribute to further declines in *S. tiburo* populations.

International Shark Fin Trade

Although larger species are preferred for the fin trade, new research shows that *S. tiburo* has also entered the international market as demand for less-expensive, smaller shark fins has



Sphyrna tiburo

FAMILY: SPHYRNIDAE
RANGE: WESTERN
ATLANTIC, EASTERN
PACIFIC



THREATS:

 **UNSUSTAINABLE FISHERIES**

 **INTERNATIONAL FIN TRADE**

 **HABITAT DEGRADATION**

 **CLIMATE CHANGE**

SPECIES PROPOSED FOR LISTING:

Appendix II in accordance with Article II paragraph 2(a) of the Convention and satisfying Criterion A and B in Annex 2a of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17):

- Bonnethead shark (*Sphyrna tiburo*)

Appendix II in accordance with Article II paragraph 2(b) of the Convention and satisfying Criterion A in Annex 2b of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17):

- *Sphyrna media*
- *Sphyrna tudes*
- *Sphyrna corona*
- *Sphyrna gilberti*
- *Eusphyrna blochii*

increased (Cardeñosa *et al.* 2019). The international market for hammerhead fins, even small-sized ones, will continue to drive population declines unless it is brought under sustainable management. The inclusion of *S. tiburo* in Appendix II, alongside the rest of the Sphyrnidae family as look-alikes, will reduce the opportunity for illegal trade.

Support this Proposal

The bonnethead shark is declining due to a multitude of threats including overfishing, the international shark fin trade, habitat degradation and climate change. Listing this shark species on Appendix II, along with its look-alikes, is needed to ensure that any international trade is legal and non-detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild, thereby preventing the further decline of the species.

REFERENCES

- This fact sheet is a summary of the proposal to include *S. tiburo* and other unlisted species of hammerhead sharks under Appendix II of CITES. The full proposal can be found on the CITES webpage: https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/19/prop/as_received/E-Sphyrnidae_spp.pdf
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