

## Silvertip Shark, *Carcharhinus albimarginatus*

Report Card assessment	Sustainable		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Least Concern	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Vulnerable
Assessors	Espinoza, M., González-Medina, E., Dulvy, N.K. & Pillans, R.D.		
Report Card Remarks	Minimal interactions with fisheries in Australian waters currently, however globally the Silvertip Shark is declining.		

### Summary

The Silvertip Shark is a large species with a wide distribution throughout the tropical Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is typically associated with coral reefs and continental shelves. The species is subject to high bycatch levels in longline, gillnet and trawl fisheries throughout its global distribution. The Silvertip Shark is slow growing, which reduces its resilience to fishing pressure. Declines in abundance have occurred throughout the Indo-Pacific



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Ocean, with estimates suggesting a 30% population reduction. Globally it is assessed as Vulnerable (IUCN). In Australia, this species is fairly common and has limited interactions with commercial fisheries. Therefore, in Australia the Silvertip Shark is assessed as Least Concern (IUCN) and the stocks considered Sustainable (SAFS). Understanding species connectivity throughout its distribution will be important in determining the future sustainability of Silvertip Shark stocks in Australian waters.

### Distribution

The Silvertip Shark is found throughout the tropical Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is found in northern Australian waters from Carnarvon (Western Australia), across the Northern Territory to Bundaberg (Queensland), with exception of the Gulf of Carpentaria and Arafura Sea (Jones et al. 1991, MIRC 2007, Last and Stevens, 2009). Further work is required to understand the connectivity of the population with Australia's regional neighbours.

### Stock structure and status

In Australian waters, there is currently limited information on population size, structure, or trend for the species. It has been reported as fairly common in waters of the Great Barrier Reef and numbers appear relatively stable (Espinoza et al. 2014). However, at Scott Reef off north-west Australia (i.e. within the Memorandum of Understanding [MOU] 1974 Box in the Timor Sea, where access by Indonesian fishers using traditional artisanal fishing techniques is permitted), Indonesian fishermen

caused substantial declines in Silvertip Sharks (and other shark species) throughout the 1990's to the point where visits by Indonesian shark fishing vessels became uncommon (Wallner and McLoughlin 1996, Meekan and Cappel 2004, Field et al. 2009). Surveys of fish markets in Indonesia and Papua Guinea have suggested that the Silvertip Shark has undergone large population declines in those waters (W. White, CSIRO, pers. comm.). Estimates from the Indian Ocean show declines in reef sharks of greater than 90% on some reefs over a 36-year period (Graham et al. 2010). Given the large decline in many reef shark species, it is suspected that the Silvertip shark has declined by more than 30% globally. In general, the current threat to stocks of this species in Australian waters from fishing is considered likely minimal due to the limited number of interactions. Therefore, Australian stocks are considered Sustainable at current levels of fishing pressure.

## Fisheries

The primary threat to the Silvertip Shark is fishing, where it is taken as bycatch throughout much of its global range. The Silvertip Shark is one of the nine main species landed by high seas longline and net fleets. It is landed in local markets in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Myanmar, and the Philippines (Kumoru 2003, SEAFDEC 2006, White 2007). In the Philippines, it is in the top ten most landed species (SEAFDEC 2006). In Australian waters, very low numbers are taken incidentally by commercial and recreational line fisheries that target Coral Trout (*Plectropomus leopardus*) in the Great Barrier Reef (Heupel et al. 2009). In northern Australia, the Silvertip Shark has been fished heavily within the Timor Box, while illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing was a large and prevalent threat during the early 2000s (Field et al. 2009). However, the IUU fishing has declined significantly since 2006 due to increased border surveillance, international agreements and possibly increased fuel prices along with reductions in abundance of target species such as the Silvertip Shark (Field et al. 2009, Haward and Bergin 2016).

## Habitat and biology

Silvertip Sharks are found in association with coral reefs, continental shelf margins and surrounding offshore islands, occurring from the surface to depths of 800 m (Compagno et al. 2005). Maximum age has been estimated at 27 years (Smart et al. 2011). Maximum size for Silvertip Shark is at least 300 cm total length (TL) (Compagno et al. 2005). Growth appears to be fairly slow, at about 9 cm per year for juveniles (Last and Stevens 2009).

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: ~27 years Max size: 300 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: 160-200 cm Females: ~195 cm TL

**Link to IUCN Page:** <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/161526/68611084>

**Link to page at Shark References:** <http://shark-references.com/species/view/Carcharhinus-albimarginatus>

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