

Blue Shark, *Prionace glauca*

Report Card assessment	Sustainable		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Refer to Global Assessment	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Near Threatened
Assessors	Stevens, J.		
Report Card Remarks	In Australia, trip limits on sharks and limited take of Blue Sharks; globally very heavily fished and also very productive		

Summary

The Blue Shark is a large bodied, pelagic species that is globally distributed throughout tropical and temperate waters. It is one of the most productive shark species. It is also one of the most heavily fished sharks in the world with very large numbers taken in pelagic tuna longline fisheries. In the Australian tuna fisheries, there are trip limits for all sharks and in recent years few Blue Sharks have been caught and they are considered sustainably fished. Stock assessments in the North



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Pacific and Atlantic have also found their capture in the tuna fisheries to be sustainable, despite the high numbers being taken. Due to the very large catches of the Blue Shark and the intensive fisheries, the Blue Shark is assessed as Near Threatened (IUCN) and in Australia, Sustainable (SAFS).

Distribution

The Blue Shark is one of the most wide-ranging of all sharks being found throughout tropical and temperate pelagic waters (from 60°N to 50°S) (Ebert et al. 2013). It is generally found throughout Australian pelagic waters apart from the eastern Arafura Sea, Gulf of Carpentaria and Torres Strait (Last and Stevens 2009).

Stock structure and status

In Australia, an analysis of Blue Shark catch data concluded that Blue Sharks were being sustainably fished in Australian waters (West et al. 2004). In the Pacific, tagging studies indicate two stocks, north and south of the equator (Urbisci et al. 2013). Recent genetic work found weak or no differentiation between the two stocks (Taguchi et al. 2015), however for management purposes they were still considered separate stocks. A 2009 stock assessment of Blue Shark in the north Pacific found they were being fished at sustainable levels, although they were likely close to the maximum sustainable level that could be fished (Kleiber et al. 2009). A more recent analysis of Catch-Per-Unit-Effort (CPUE) data indicated that the Blue Shark standardised CPUE has declined since 2010 in both the north and south Pacific and recommended a stock assessment for the south Pacific Blue Shark (Rice et al. 2015).

Fisheries

Blue Sharks are one of the most heavily fished sharks in the world with very large numbers taken in pelagic tuna longline fisheries. The meat is of relatively low value but the fins are valuable. In Australia, the Tuna and Billfish Fisheries (east and west) are now limited to a maximum of 20 sharks (of all species) per trip and in recent years few Blue Sharks have been caught (Patterson et al. 2015). In the Western Central Pacific Ocean, it was estimated that Blue Shark catches were at low levels in the early 1990s, steadily increased until 2000 then sharply rose to a peak in 2003 when between 3.2-5.9 million individuals and 116,000-223,000 t were taken (Clarke et al. 2009). In the Atlantic, it was estimated that between 1995 and 2006, Blue Shark catches were around 50,000 t per year (+/- 15,000 t) (ICCAT 2008). In the north Pacific, it was estimated that the annual Blue Shark catch from 1998 to 2002 rose from 2 million to 2.5 million individuals (Kleiber et al. 2009). Globally, from 2010-2014 it was estimated that 107,000 t to 140,000 t of Blue Shark were taken annually (FAO 2016).

Habitat and biology

The Blue Shark is found in oceanic and pelagic waters to depths of 1,000 m (Last and Stevens 2009). It prefers waters of 12-20°C (Last and Stevens 2009). It moves extensively throughout the world's oceans often moving to higher latitudes with seasonal currents (Stevens 1976, Casey 1985, Stevens 1990). Maximum size is 383 cm total length (TL) (Last and Stevens 2009). Maximum age estimates range from 12-28 years (Clarke et al. 2015). Age at maturity is relatively young at 4-6 years for males and 5-7 years for females (Clarke et al. 2015). The species has large litters (average from 25- 35 pups) and is thought to breed every year (though some studies show they breed once every two years) (Clarke et al. 2015).

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: estimated from 12-28 years Max size: 383 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: 4-6 years, 182-218 cm TL Females: 5-7 years, 183-221 cm TL

Link to IUCN Page: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/39381/0>

Link to page at Shark References: <http://shark-references.com/species/view/Prionace-glauca>

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