



FACTSHEET

AUGUST  
2014

WWF-Pacific

# Pacific Shark Heritage Programme

Made in the Pacific, for the planet

Protecting iconic species, food security and a way of life



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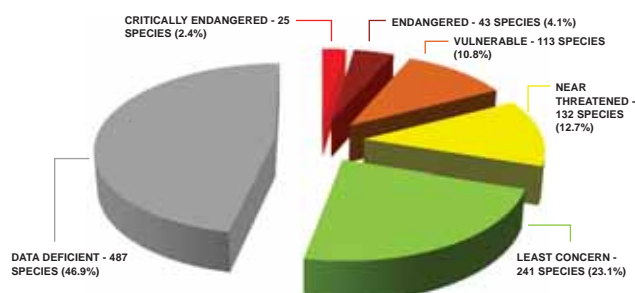
Sharks, and their close cousins the rays, are intrinsically linked with the South Pacific's cultural heritage and they play a significant role in the food security of some of the most vulnerable coastal communities. These unique marine species are so synonymous with Pacific Island cultures that they have been a cornerstone of indigenous legends and fables for generations. From Dakuwaqa the Fijian shark-god who protects fishermen from the evil denizens of the seas to Ina the distressed damsel, who longed to see her betrothed and travelled on shark-back from the Cook Islands, sharks & rays have been of significance both on land and at sea.

Yet these iconic species are under significant pressure and showing worrying rates of decline. The most recent IUCN assessment of over 1000 species of sharks, rays and chimaeras around the world estimates that **ONE QUARTER** are believed to be threatened under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. The main reason for this is overfishing.

WWF and our partner organisation TRAFFIC are focussing our efforts on addressing the key drivers of overfishing throughout the region. The Pacific Shark Heritage Programme will strive to stem the pressure on key shark & ray stocks through improved management at critical points in the national, regional and international shark governance frameworks. The Programme will support national governments to implement and improve management strategies to conserve and responsibly utilise sharks and rays.

## OVERCOMING UNCERTAINTY

### IUCN Red List Assessment of sharks & rays



One of the biggest problems facing threatened species is the inherent lack of data for almost half of all species of sharks & rays.

## BRINGING ABOUT POSITIVE CHANGE

The overarching goal of the Pacific Shark Heritage Programme is to ensure that shark and ray species are managed under long-term sustainable strategies. WWF & TRAFFIC will work with national administrations to assist them in meeting international obligations and recommendations. Through the Pacific Shark Heritage Programme WWF & TRAFFIC will offer practical solutions and assistance with both fisheries management and also in developing sustainable shark-based

<sup>1</sup>Chimaeras are fish closely related to sharks & rays. When we refer to "sharks" in the broader sense, we are also referring to rays and chimaeras.

eco-tourism strategies to ensure that Pacific Island nations and their people benefit from their natural resources. By utilising sharks & rays as a natural asset, many countries can profit financially from the non-extractive use of sharks in coherent & long-term eco-tourism plans that also reward local communities.

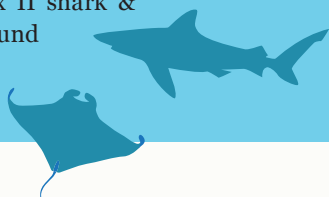
There are a number of international conservation and management measures for sharks and rays which include

- CITES – The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna & Flora is an international agreement to ensure trade in specimens of wild animals & plants does not threaten their survival
- CMS – The Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals aims to conserve migratory species throughout their range.
- Food Agriculture Organisation International Plan of Action for sharks – A set of guidelines to ensure conservation and management of sharks and their long-term sustainable use through National Plans of Action (NPOAs).

WWF & TRAFFIC understand the limitations and difficulties facing Pacific Island nations in managing their marine resources. The Pacific Shark Heritage Programme has been developed to directly assist governments in addressing these issues for sharks and rays. WWF & TRAFFIC will assist governments by:

- Producing a set of affordable, replicable and viable methodologies to assess shark and ray populations to enable the development of suitable long-term management strategies.
- Build partnerships with other regional institutions who may be able to bring complimentary expertises to the Programme.
- Collaborate to ensure compliance with international commitments.
- Produce a practical best-practise guide that can be used to create and maintain shark and ray focused tourism sites that are well managed and help to conserve specific species of sharks and rays, while benefiting local communities.

The Southern Pacific is home to both pelagic offshore sharks, such as the oceanic whitetip (*Carcharhinus longimanus*) and whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*), as well as inshore coastal species such as blacktip reef (*Carcharhinus melanopterus*) and whitetip reef sharks (*Triaenodon obesus*). Six of the seven recently listed CITES Appendix II shark & ray species are also found throughout the region.



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## CALL TO ACTION

The Pacific Islands region is one whose cultures are intrinsically woven into the natural environment, and the loss of these marine species would mean a significant change to the normal ways of life. In order to continue delivering on our goals, we need your support.

Becoming part of the Pacific Shark Heritage Programme will mean you are part of the solution towards the recovery and of shark and ray populations and maintaining the integrity of the Pacific way of life, by safeguarding tradition through sharing the legends.

**TRAFFIC**  
the wildlife trade monitoring network



#### Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

[wwfpacific.org](http://wwfpacific.org)

#### For more information

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