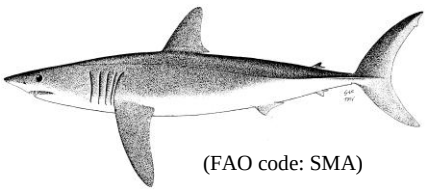
Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
Commission des Thons de l'Océan Indien
iotc ctoi



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STATUS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN SHORTFIN MAKO SHARK (*ISURUS OXYRINCHUS*) RESOURCE

TABLE 1. Status of shortfin mako shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) in the Indian Ocean – IUCN threat status

Common name	Scientific name	IUCN threat status		
		Global status	WIO	EIO
Shortfin mako shark	*Isurus oxyrinchus*	Vulnerable	–	–

IUCN = International Union for Conservation of Nature; WIO = Western Indian Ocean; EIO = Eastern Indian Ocean
SOURCES: IUCN (2007, 2011)

The WPEB **RECOMMENDED** the following management advice for shortfin mako sharks in the Indian Ocean, for the consideration of the Scientific Committee:

INDIAN OCEAN STOCK – MANAGEMENT ADVICE

The WPEB **RECOMMENDED** the following management advice for shortfin mako shark in the Indian Ocean, for the consideration of the Scientific Committee, noting that there remains considerable uncertainty about the relationship between abundance and the standardized CPUE series from the Japanese longline fleet, and about the total catches over the past decade.

> ***Stock status.*** The current IUCN threat status of 'Vulnerable' applies to shortfin mako sharks globally (Table 1). Trends in the Japanese CPUE series suggest that the longline vulnerable biomass has declined from 1994 to 2003, and has been increasing since then. There is a paucity of information available on this species and this situation is not expected to improve in the short to medium term. There is no quantitative stock assessment or basic fishery indicators currently available for shortfin mako shark in the Indian Ocean therefore the stock status is highly uncertain. Shortfin mako sharks are commonly taken by a range of fisheries in the Indian Ocean. Because of their life history characteristics – they are relatively long lived (over 30 years), females mature at 18–21 years, and have relativity few offspring (<25 pups every two or three years), the shortfin mako shark is vulnerable to overfishing.
>
> ***Outlook.*** Maintaining or increasing effort will probably result in further declines in biomass, productivity and CPUE. The impact of piracy in the western Indian Ocean has resulted in the displacement and subsequent concentration of a substantial portion of longline fishing effort into certain areas in the southern and eastern Indian Ocean. It is therefore unlikely that catch and effort on shortfin mako shark will decline in these areas in the near future, and may result in localised depletion.

The Scientific Committee considered the following:

- The available evidence indicates considerable risk to the stock status at current effort levels.
- The two primary sources of data that drive the assessment, total catches and CPUE are highly uncertain and should be investigated further as a priority.
- Noting that current reported catches are estimated (probably largely underestimated) at an average ~990 t over the last five years, ~738 t in 2010, maintaining or increasing effort will probably result in further declines in biomass, productivity and CPUE.
- The SC recommended that mechanisms are developed by the Commission to encourage CPCs to comply with their reporting requirement on sharks.
- The SC agreed that three options should be considered for amendment of Resolution 08/04 concerning the recording of the catch by longline fishing vessels in the IOTC area in order to improve data collection and statistics on sharks that would allow the development of stock status indicators.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

(Information collated from reports of the Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch and other sources as cited)

CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Shortfin mako shark in the Indian Ocean are currently subject to a number of conservation and management measures adopted by the Commission:

- Resolution 05/05 *Concerning the conservation of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by IOTC* includes minimum reporting requirements for sharks, calls for full utilisation of sharks and includes a ratio of fin-to-body weight for shark fins retained onboard a vessel.
- Resolution 08/04 *Concerning the recording of catch by longline fishing vessels in the IOTC area* sets out the minimum logbook requirements for longline fishing vessels over 24 metres length and under 24 metres if they fish outside the EEZ of their flag State. As per this resolution, catch of all sharks must be recorded.
- Resolution 10/03 *Concerning the recording of catch by fishing vessels in the IOTC area* sets out minimum logbook requirements for all purse-seine vessels 24 metres length overall or greater and those under 24 metres if they fish outside the EEZs of their flag States. As per this resolution, catch and discard of all shark species should be recorded.
- Resolution 11/04 *on a Regional Observer Scheme* requires data on blue shark interactions to be recorded by observers and reported to the IOTC within 150 days. The Regional Observer Scheme (ROS) started on 1st July 2010.

Extracts from Resolutions 09/06 and 11/04

RESOLUTION 05/05 CONCERNING THE CONSERVATION OF SHARKS CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH FISHERIES MANAGED BY IOTC

3. CPCs shall take the necessary measures to require that their fishermen fully utilise their entire catches of sharks. Full utilisation is defined as retention by the fishing vessel of all parts of the shark excepting head, guts and skins, to the point of first landing.

RESOLUTION 08/04 CONCERNING THE RECORDING OF CATCH BY LONGLINE FISHING VESSELS IN THE IOTC AREA

1. Each flag CPC shall ensure that all long line fishing vessels flying its flag and authorized to fish species managed by IOTC be subject to a data recording system. ….

RESOLUTION 11/04 ON A REGIONAL OBSERVER SCHEME

10. Observers shall:

b) Observe and estimate catches as far as possible with a view to identifying catch composition and monitoring discards, by-catches and size frequency

FISHERIES INDICATORS

General

Shortfin mako shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) is widely distributed in tropical and temperate waters warmer than 16°C (Fig. 1) and is one of the fastest swimming shark species. It is known to leap out of the water when hooked and is often found in the same waters as swordfish. This species is at the top of the food chain, feeding on fast-moving fishes such as swordfish and tunas and occasionally on other sharks. Table 2 outlines some of the key life history traits of shortfin mako shark in the Indian Ocean.

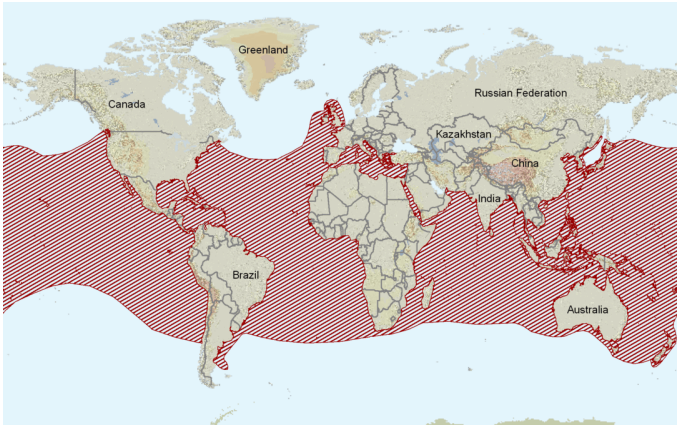

Fig. 1. The worldwide distribution of the shortfin mako shark (source: www.iucnredlist.org)

TABLE 2. Biology of Indian Ocean shortfin mako shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*)

Parameter	Description
Range and stock structure	Widely distributed in tropical and temperate waters warmer than 16°C. Makos prefer epipelagic and littoral waters from the surface down to depths of 500 meters. Shortfin mako is not known to school. It has a tendency to follow warm water masses polewards in the summer. Tagging results from the North Atlantic Ocean showed that makos migrated over long distances and this suggests that there is a single well-mixed population in this area. Area of overlap with IOTC management area = high. No information is available on stock structure of shortfin mako sharks in the Indian Ocean.
Longevity	Maximum lifespans reported for this species are 32 years for females and 29 years for males in the western North Atlantic.
Maturity (50%)	Sexual maturity is estimated to be reached at 18-19 years or 290-300 m TL for females and 8 years or about 200 m TL for males in the western North Atlantic and 19-21 years or 207-290 m TL for females and 7-9 years or 180-190 m TL for males in the western South Pacific. In the western South Indian Ocean maturity was estimated at about 270 m TL for females and 190-210 m TL for males. The length at maturity of female shortfin mako sharks differs between the Northern and Southern hemispheres.
Reproduction	Female shortfin mako sharks are aplacental viviparous. Developing embryos feed on unfertilized eggs in the uterus during the gestation period, whose length is subject to debate but is believed to last 15-18 months. Litter size ranges from 4 to 25 pups (mean=12.5), with larger sharks producing more offspring. The nursery areas are apparently in deep tropical waters. The length of the reproductive cycle is up to three years. Generation time is estimated to be 14 years. • Fecundity: medium (<25 pups) • Generation time: 23 years • Gestation Period: 15-18 months • Reproductive cycle is biennial or triennial
Size (length and weight)	Maximum size of shortfin mako sharks in Northwest Atlantic Ocean is 4 m and 570 kg. In the Indian Ocean a female individual of 248 cm FL and 130 kg TW was aged as 18 years old. Length–weight relationship for both sexes combined in the Indian Ocean is TW=0.349*10-4 * FL2.76544. New-born pups are around 70 cm (TL).

SOURCES: Bass et al. (1973); Mejuto et al (2005); Romanov & Romanova (2009)

Fisheries

Shortfin mako sharks are often targeted by some semi-industrial, artisanal and recreational fisheries and are a bycatch of industrial fisheries (pelagic longline tuna and swordfish fisheries and anecdotally by the purse seine fishery). In other Oceans, due to its energetic displays and edibility, the shortfin mako shark is considered one of the great gamefish of the world. There is little information on the fisheries prior to the early 1970's, and some countries continue not to collect shark data while others do collect it but do not report it to IOTC. It appears that significant catches of sharks have gone unrecorded in several countries. Furthermore, many catch records probably under-represent the actual catches of sharks because they do not account for discards (i.e. do not record catches of sharks for which only the fins are kept or of sharks usually discarded because of their size or condition) or they reflect dressed weights instead of live weights. FAO also compiles landings data on elasmobranchs, but the statistics are limited by the lack of species-specific data and data from the major fleets.

The practice of shark finning is considered to be regularly occurring for this species (Clarke 2008; Clarke et al. 2006) and the bycatch/release injury rate is unknown but probably high.

TABLE 3. Estimated frequency of occurrence and bycatch mortality in the Indian Ocean pelagic fisheries.

Gears	PS	LL		BB/TROL/HAND	GILL	UNCL
		SWO	TUNA			
Frequency	rare	common		rare–common	unknown	unknown
Fishing Mortality	unknown	13 to	0 to 31%	unknown	unknown	unknown
Post release mortality	unknown	19%		unknown	unknown	unknown

SOURCES: Romanov (2002, 2008); Ariz et al. (2006); Dudley & Simpfendorfer (2006); Peterson et al. (2008); Romanov et al. (2008)

Catch trends

The catch estimates for shortfin mako shark are highly uncertain as is their utility in terms of minimum catch estimates. Four CPCs have reported detailed data on sharks (i.e. Australia, EU (Spain, Portugal and United Kingdom), South Africa, and Sri-Lanka while nine CPCs have reported partial data or data aggregated for all species (i.e. Belize, China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Oman, Seychelles, Mauritius, UK-territories). For CPCs reporting longline data by species (i.e. Australia, Spain, Portugal, United Kingdom and South Africa), 12% of the catch of sharks by longliners, all targeting swordfish, were shortfin mako sharks.

TABLE 4. Catch estimates for shortfin mako shark in the Indian Ocean for 2009 and 2010.

Catch		2009	2010
Most recent catch	Shortfin mako shark	561 t	738 t
	nei-sharks	62,229 t	61,966 t
Mean catch over the last 5 years (2006–2010)	Shortfin mako shark		990 t
	nei-sharks		64,838 t

Note that the catches recorded for sharks are thought incomplete. The catches of sharks are usually not reported and when they are they might not represent the total catches of this species but simply those retained on board. It is also likely that the amounts recorded refer to weights of processed specimens, not to live weights. In 2010, seven countries reported catches of blue sharks in the IOTC region.

Nominal and standardised CPUE Trends

Data not available at the IOTC Secretariat. Historical research data shows overall decline in CPUE and mean weight of mako sharks (Romanov et al. 2008). CPUE in South African protection net is fluctuating without any trend (Holmes et al. 2009).

Average weight in the catch by fisheries

Data not available.

Number of squares fished

Catch and effort data not available.

STOCK ASSESSMENT

No quantitative stock assessment for blue shark has been undertaken by the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch.

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