

Revised shark kill estimates are announced

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A U.S. ocean conservation organization estimates as many as 73 million sharks are killed each year worldwide for their valuable fins.

In what's called the first real-data study of sharks harvested for their fins. The University of Miami's Pew Institute for Ocean Science said its estimates of the shark kills -- ranging from as few as 26 million to as many as 73 million annually -- are three to four times higher than originally reported by the United Nations.

"The shark fin trade is notoriously secretive," said the study's lead author, Shelley Clarke, a U.S. fisheries scientist based in Hong Kong and Japan. "But we were able tap into fin auction records and convert from fin sizes and weights to whole shark equivalents to get a good handle on the actual numbers."

Used in China and across Southeast Asia for shark fin soup, a delicacy served at various events, fins are the most valuable part of the shark. The institute said the fins typically are sliced off as the shark, sometimes still alive, is thrown back into the ocean.

The research appears as the cover story in the October edition of the journal *Ecology Letters*.

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