

Sharks worth more in the ocean than on the menu

May 30 2013



A UBC study shows shark tourism currently generates more than US\$314 million annually and is expected to more than double in the next 20 years. Credit: Shawn Heinrichs

Sharks are worth more in the ocean than in a bowl of soup, according to researchers from the University of British Columbia.

A new study, published today in *Oryx – The International Journal of*

Conservation, shows that shark ecotourism currently generates more than US\$314 million annually worldwide and is expected to more than double to US\$780 million in the next 20 years.

In comparison, the landed value of global shark fisheries is currently US\$630 million and has been in decline for the past decade. An estimated 38 million sharks are killed per year to feed the global fin trade alone.

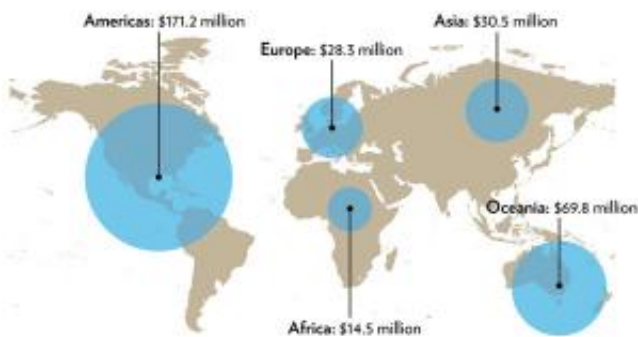
"The emerging shark [tourism industry](#) attracts nearly 600,000 shark watchers annually, directly supporting 10,000 jobs," says Andrés Cisneros-Montemayor, a PhD candidate with UBC's Fisheries Economics Research Unit and lead author of the study. "It is abundantly clear that leaving sharks in the ocean is worth much more than putting them on the menu."

Growth of shark ecotourism

The shark ecotourism industry currently generates over US\$314 million in expenditures per year. Projections indicate that global expenditures could double in the next 20 years.

BY REGION

Current Annual Expenditures (in US\$)



GLOBALLY

Current total

US\$314.3 million

20-year projection

up to US\$785 million

A new study by UBC researchers shows growth of shark tourism around the world. Credit: The Pew Charitable Trusts

"Sharks are slow to mature and produce few [offspring](#)," says Rashid Sumaila, senior author and director of UBC's Fisheries Centre. "The protection of live [sharks](#), especially through dedicated [protected areas](#), can benefit a much wider economic spectrum while helping the species recover."

The research team from UBC, the University of Hawaii and Universidad Autónoma de Baja California Sur in Mexico examined shark fisheries and shark ecotourism data from 70 sites in 45 countries. Almost \$124 million in [tourism](#) dollars were generated annually in the Caribbean from shark tourism, supporting more than 5,000 jobs. In Australia and New Zealand, 29,000 shark watchers help generate almost \$40 million in tourism expenditure a year.

Provided by University of British Columbia

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