

GREEN MARINE PROGRAMME: Angling for the future

Dear Anglers,

In collaboration with Marine and Coastal Management, SASC is asking anglers who target sharks to assist us with the collection of valuable scientific data. The purpose of this programme is to encourage a sense of cooperation between anglers and South Africa's scientific and management communities, simultaneously promoting information sharing between the sectors and encouraging the development of cooperative partnerships.

The data collected by anglers will be used for the development of a geographic information system (GIS) database and information management system containing relevant distribution, biological and gear-specific information. These data will be housed and analyzed at SASC, and will be used for informing scientific, management and sector-specific decisions.

Reliable scientific data are the key to educated management decisions. Thus, we implore all anglers participating in the Green Marine Programme to submit information that is detailed and accurate.

Pending sufficient funding, the database will be made available online such that all information and management recommendations are transparent.

We look forward to your cooperation and assistance.

Kind regards,
Meaghen McCord
(on behalf of the South African Shark Conservancy (SASC)).

Remember... a healthy shark means a healthy ocean!



Responsible angling begins with you!

RESPONSIBLE ANGLING GUIDELINES: SHARKS

Contrary to popular belief sharks, skates & rays are very sensitive to improper handling techniques by recreational anglers. Because they spend their life in the water, these animals possess several unique characteristics that make them unsuitable for life on land. Although the survival rate of sharks, skates & rays caught by recreational anglers remains largely unquantified, anglers can minimize damages & increase the chance of survival by following a few simple guidelines.

Some background info...

Sharks evolved more than 400 million years ago! Having outlived the dinosaurs and survived several mass extinctions, one would imagine them to be hardy, durable animals. However, although perfectly designed for their environment, sharks are very sensitive to stress, particularly stress induced by fighting & handling during angling.

There are several reasons for this, but one of the most important is that, unlike terrestrial animals, the internal organs of sharks are not housed within special cavities that protect them – instead, they float around rather loosely within a single, soft cavity. This makes the organs particularly susceptible to damage when dragged over hard surfaces or lifted out of the water.

Ocean athletes?

Another reason is that sharks suffer from acidosis. Have you ever run a marathon or over-exerted yourself during a hard-core gym session? If so, you probably know how sore your muscles are the next day. This muscle soreness is caused by acidosis – or the body's inability to produce enough energy to supply the demands of the muscles.

Interestingly, sharks suffer from the same condition which is heightened by extreme exertion endured during angling. Acidosis in sharks can, and often does, lead to the death of the animal.

Why a responsible angling technique?

Because of the nature of recreational angling, many fishers are keen to minimize their impact on the marine environment. By taking several small steps, you can help ensure your shark survives its encounter with you.

Take these simple steps to minimize stress on the animal:

- 1) **Remove** all hooks and line, if possible. If it is not possible to remove the hook, cut the trace as short as possible to minimize the chance of entanglement.
- 2) **Keep a tight trace line** at all times so the animal cannot entangle itself in the trace & try to keep the trace line away from the body. This will also minimize the entanglement risk.
- 3) **Try not** to use 'J-hooks'. J-hooks can be easily swallowed and may cause permanent damage to the animals' stomach and/or intestine. Instead, try to use circle hooks. Even better, a barbless hook will inflict the least damage.
- 4) If you do not like the idea of barbless hooks, try **flattening the barb** instead.
- 5) **Try to** minimize the fight time. This will ensure the sharks' acidosis levels do not rise to extreme levels & its ability to recover will be much greater.
- 6) **Do not** use a gaff to land the shark. Instead, reel it in as close as possible and use a stretcher to carry it.
- 7) **Do not** drag, carry or hold a shark by its tail. The spinal cord of sharks is like a human's & any unnecessary pressure on the spine can inflict permanent damage;
- 8) **Do not** drag the shark over a rocky surface. This will cause damage to both its skin & its internal organs. If there is sand nearby land your catch there instead.
- 9) **Try not** to take the shark out of the water to measure or weigh it. A shark's internal organs (liver, heart, genital organs, etc) are not held in place like a human's. Instead they are specially designed to be supported by water and their organs are easily crushed when out of their environment. Use your rod (or similar item) to measure the length of the animal. Length-weight conversions exist for most recreationally caught elasmobranch species, so you can always determine the weight afterward.
- 10) **Do not** carry or drag the shark by its gill slits, eyes, spiracles or any other opening. Sharks require all their uniquely designed senses to hunt and maneuver effectively. Their gills also enable them to breathe and any damage to the gill slits may result in a slow death by suffocation.
- 11) **Minimize** the shark's time out of the water if you must take it out of the water.
- 12) If you must remove the shark from the water **restrain its movement** by putting pressure on the pectoral fins (if enough support is available to assist you). Also use a stretcher.
- 13) Take all **photos** of your catch quickly. By minimizing your interaction time with the shark, you can improve its chance of survival.



