

19 July 2007

By: Stefan Anitei, Science Editor



Clarke

[Chinese Shark Fin Soup Demand Could Exterminate Sharks During Our Lifetime](#)

73 million sharks killed annually

Sharks have pervaded the Earth for over 450 million years, before any plant or animal got out of the water and colonized the terrestrial surface. Now they face extinction due to a human caprice: fin shark soup. This dish could cause extinction within a generation due to overfishing for their fins, has signaled on Wednesday WildAid group, calling on the Chinese government to start measures for protecting the species. "90 % of shark fin is consumed in China and demand is growing rapidly as the economy develops leading to more sharks being caught, many illegally in areas that are supposed to be protected," signaled WildAid. Once, shark fin was a gift offered just to emperors and shark fin soup is traditionally served at Chinese wedding banquets and on different occasions when the host wants to make an impression on the guests with expensive dishes. With the growing number of wealthy Chinese businessmen, the number of this kind of ignorant hosts is increasing as well. Some also think it is healthy, but the fin is nothing more than tasteless cartilage, sought more for its texture, than flavor."These animals have been here for 400 million years and they may disappear in one generation, not to provide people with basic food, but for a solely luxury item," executive director Peter Knights told a news conference to launch a new report. "Hammerhead, Great White and Basking sharks were some of the species at risk. Shark fin is becoming cheaper and eaten by a growing number of people in China - perhaps by around 100 million people a year." signals a WildAid report. "Precisely the role China plays is one of unsustainable demand. The demand for shark fin soup as it now stands, and as it's set to increase, cannot be sustained by wild shark populations. This is a role where the Chinese government can show genuine global leadership and can help many other countries around the world that are extremely poor and less well resourced, to protect their shark populations." said Steve Trent, WildAid president. A 2006 research showed that annually 73 million sharks are killed for their fins and the demand for shark fin soup grows with 5 % per year.