

## Fin Trade Imperils Basking Shark

Washington Post  
Science Notebook  
Monday, April 23, 2007; Page A06

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*The basking shark is still being hunted despite global restrictions.*  
Photo Credit: Sally Sharrock -- Shark Trust

Basking sharks continue to be hunted for their fins despite global protections for the world's second-largest fish, a new report indicates.

Using DNA analysis, researchers found fins from the sharks -- which have been declared endangered by the World Conservation Union and are under strict international trade regulations -- in both the Japanese and Hong Kong markets.

The findings, published in the online edition of the journal *Animal Conservation*, indicate that the trade in shark fins continues to pose a threat to the species. The sharks can grow as long as 40 feet and are considered vulnerable because they mature

late and have few offspring.

"The demand for basking shark fins, which can fetch prices in excess of \$50,000 for a single large fin, is continuing to drive the exploitation, surreptitious and otherwise, of this highly threatened species," said Mahmood Shivji, who led the research and directs the Guy Harvey Research Institute at Nova Southeastern University in Florida. "This finding, along with our recent research documenting extremely low genetic diversity in basking sharks worldwide, raises urgent concerns about the longer-term health of this species."

The scientists, who also came from the Pew Institute for Ocean Science, Imperial College London and Britain's Durham University, said they learned that when Chinese fin traders used the term "Nuo Wei Tian Jiu," they were often referring to basking sharks.

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