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## A San Diego 5th grader is trying to end shark finning, will you help?

BY [PARA\\_SIGHT](#), ON MARCH 15TH, 2012 7 COMMENTS [FISHING, INDUSTRY & GOVERNMENT](#) [CONSERVATION, FINNING, FISHERIES, SHARK FINNING, SHARKS](#)

Shark finning is the capture of sharks expressly for the removal of their fins, which are used to make shark fin soup, a popular status symbol in many Chinese communities. I could understand and accept this practice if the fins were taken from animals that were harvested sustainably and for which markets existed for the rest of the body, but that's generally not how it works. The fins are so valuable that for many fishers it is not worth keeping the rest of the body; dead sharks weigh a lot, y'see, and each carcass takes up valuable space that could be fins. So, finning is usually a grisly and abhorrent affair wherein sharks (most any pelagic species) are captured by nets or long lines, have all their fins severed and are then thrown back, often without regard to whether they are alive or not (if they are, they certainly won't be for long)



Image: Oceana

Thankfully, public awareness of finning is on the rise and the practice has come under intense pressure of late. [Some](#) have [argued](#) that this pressure represents a form of cultural discrimination against Chinese or Chinese Americans. For the people who feel that way, I dig deep down into my sympathy bag and come up with not. very. much. Get over yourselves. It's not about you, it's about *the sharks*. We kill hundreds of millions of them per year and their populations globally are in serious decline. Are you telling me you can't give up a *bowl of soup* to save one of nature's greatest creations? Please. You know what? If we keep finning, then one day we'll fin the last shark and eat the last bowl of soup and then where will we be? In *exactly the same position*, only now we'll *know* that the reason we can't eat shark fin soup anymore is our own fault. I'd love to think that we could develop shark fisheries that are sustainable over the long term, but their biology largely precludes that; they grow too slowly and are too slow to mature, and this particular market is for such a tiny part of the animal. Face facts, one way or another, shark fin soup is doomed, it's just a question of whether it takes all the sharks with it. I would think it the mark of an advanced society that we can choose to forgo something we personally enjoy and find culturally significant, in order to conserve a whole class of animals for all cultures, not to mention for this and future generations. Traditions are important, but cultures are also dynamic and this is one situation where we really need to make a change.

Enter Max Guinn, a 5th grade student from San Diego. Max is an enterprising young man. He co-founded a group called [KidsEcoClub](#) as "a place where kids and the environment meet" and has started [a petition](#), addressed to President Obama no less, pleading for a legislative ban on shark finning. Now, the US already has legislation on the books that is aimed at minimising finning: the Shark Conservation Act that Pres. Obama passed in December 2010. It requires that sharks be landed with their fins on or

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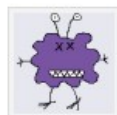
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that the weight of fins on a fishing vessel be matched by a proportional weight of shark carcasses (in other words, you cant have more fins than sharks). Max wants a tougher stance, however. He's asking to make it illegal for people to possess, sell, trade or distribute shark fins. Six states (and several other countries) have proactively enacted these kinds of bans, but Max wants it to be federal law and he needs your help to do it. Please consider [signing his petition](#) and distributing this link to others. By taking action now we can all help save shark lives, preserve a semblance of balance in the oceans and reward the activism of young people who are living up to the doctrine "be the change you want to see in the world". Do it now, it will only take a minute.



## 7 comments to A San Diego 5th grader is trying to end shark finning, will you help?



Crabe

March 15, 2012 at 10:37 · Reply

I'd love to sign this petition right now. But I'm not American. I can only hope such petitions to stop shark finning will spread to other country.



Kristen Sutherland

March 15, 2012 at 11:50 · Reply

Excellent work! Keep it up!



Jennifer Isaacs

March 15, 2012 at 12:02 · Reply

Fishing is fine. Over fishing is not. I know some live on the economy of this but I cannot see why they can't live off other fishing. The oceans need a way to improve on population of its endangered.

'Shark populations are dwindling due to heavy commercial fishing and the general attitude that they are nothing more than a nuisance. This shortsighted view of the ocean ecosystem is dangerous—a shortage of sharks could be disastrous to the health of ocean food chains, including but certainly not limited to the ones we rely upon for food resources.'

<http://www.oceanicresearch.org/education/wonders/sharks.html>

Why do we need to kill sharks so much? Is it just because we need a shark flavored soup or out of fear?

'Shark Myths De-Mystified

In modern times, the shark is known as a predator that will attack at the sight of blood. However, this myth of sharks is not necessarily accurate. In fact, shark attacks were less than 20 a year in the late 1800s. It has not been until the last two decades that shark attacks have become a more known factor in various areas of the globe.

It has been found that these attacks are not because sharks are typical predators. Typically, they will occur because there is a territorial threat or disturbance that occurs in the sharks inhabited area. At other times, these attacks will be ones that are provoked by humans, causing the shark to try to keep a safe ground. Things such as spear fishing and eco-tourism are contributions to sharks that feel the need to attack. Even among these attacks, it is only certain species that will feel a threat and will respond. Others will simply move into a different territory.

Through this predator fish is an evolution that has led to a specific lifestyle with sharks. In every area of the ocean is a type of shark that has moved into their living space, becoming one of the most known ocean dwelling creatures.'

<http://www.sharks-world.com/>

Please think about it.



Judy Zabriskie

March 15, 2012 at 12:24 · Reply

Thank you!



Gina Martin

March 15, 2012 at 13:31 · Reply

You are a wonderful young man. Smarter than the adults that are destroying our planet. Keep up the good work!

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carol dawes

March 15, 2012 at 14:18 · [Reply](#)

Would sign your petition in an instant if i was in the US. These shark butchers need to be stopped for the sake of the largest animal in the eco food chain. Carol.



Michael Stone

March 16, 2012 at 07:41 · [Reply](#)

Hi I tried to sign your petition to stop shark finning but couldn't since im not in the U.S.A you might try to start an international petition and i'll certainly sign it

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