

The anti-shark fin movement

by Aaron Wong

I think the name pretty much says it all. The Anti-Shark Fin Moment is a non-profitable organization put together by Dive Logic to help spread the message of shark conservation.

But don't get me wrong, we are not against the fishing of sharks but the senseless and often cruel practice of 'finning'. What is 'finning'? Well for those who don't yet know, prepare yourselves... Most sharks have their fins cut off while they are still alive. The rest of the animal is then thrown back into the sea to save deck space. These animals either end up bleeding to death while smaller fishes eat away at their wounds, or they drown... Which ever comes first. (Yes, sharks can drown too! Most sharks need to swim constantly to pump water through their gills thus getting the oxygen they need. But without their fins, how are they suppose to do that?) Not having fins also means one thing, they will just keep sinking. So if bleeding and drowning don't kill them, the pressure eventually would. (Just imagine, would you like it if I strapped you to a rock, cut off your arms and legs and push you into the water?!) 100 million sharks go though that every year, and all this for a bowl of 'shark fin soup'...

Do I really need to say more? Maybe I do, this time lets talk about shark fin soup. Shark fin soup is made up of cartilage (soft bone), which is tasteless and scientifically proven to have little nutritional values. (You might as well chew on your own nails because it's the same thing!)... Well in fact it's not the



Shark fishermen in Yemen cutting off the fins while others dry on a pole behind them. ©Peter Rowlands

same... it's worse.

CBS news has recently reported that shark fins contains mercury poison. Chula Unisearch, a testing laboratory found that 15 out of 45 randomly purchased shark fins contains mercury more than the 'safe' level. One sample even had mercury concentration that exceeds 7 times the FDA limits.

But once again, don't get me wrong. Sharks are NOT poisonous. Being the top predator of the food chain, sharks end up as receptacles for all the toxic materials that have been consumed by smaller fishes feeding in polluted coastal waters. So in a way, we poison the sharks, fin them in the most cruel way possible, and eat back the same shit (I mean toxic!) that WE put in them in the first place! How dumb is that?! So please get this into your head, in long term, shark fin IS harmful to you.

Now that we've got that clear, I guess saving



the sharks goes beyond just educating people. While some have already read or even seen images of finning, many still continue to consume shark fin soup even if they are so called 'animal lovers'. Why? How can any moral person do that? I think it boils down to attitude and how people see sharks. One diner once asked me, "Why don't you just eat it since it's already cooked, and it'll go to waste if you don't." I smiled and replied, "Well, at least I can sleep tonight knowing that I'm not part of the killing." He went on by saying, "How much difference would that make?" Still smiling, I said, "Together we CAN make a difference." ...

Let's put it this way, would you eat something called 'Dog's leg soup'? ...No? Why not? In fact some countries even ban the eating of dogs. Why again? Dogs are not endangered and they are easy to catch. Maybe it's because they are just so cute and we see them as 'man's best friend'. That's the difference. So to all I say, 'Let's save the animals, even the ugly ones'.

I'm not saying that sharks are ugly. In fact if you have seen a shark face to face like I did, you'll find that they are graceful, curious creatures that are often more scared of us than we are of them. They are NOT the 'Jaws' you see in the movies that swim around looking for human lunch. They are shy and often flee even before I can

take a picture. Sadly even these brief encounters are becoming rare. Divers would often be so excited to see just one shark. That is sad.

So for those who are still eating shark fin or know someone who does, please stop. 100 million sharks a year is an unsustainable carnage for an animal that reproduces so slowly. And for something that is harmful to our health, it's truly not worth it. Remember, nothing lasts forever, but extinction does. It's as real as that. Let there not come a day where the only place our children, or our children's children, can see a shark is in a museum or a book. We have lost many species due to man's silly mistakes. Let's stop THIS mistake while we can.

It is indeed our money that fuels this trade, and if the 'eating' stops, the killing truly can too. Together we can make a difference.

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