

California Bans Shark Fin

Difficulty:

AVERAGE

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Discussion activities to be done after completing this EA lesson

Today's report is about shark fin and its use for an expensive Chinese soup. How is shark fin obtained? Why has it just been banned in California? Why do some people disagree with the ban?

Extension discussion topics

A. Talking about and going over the specific topic / idea / issue in listening text

Introduction = Why is there a high demand for shark fin? Why has shark fin been banned in some places? Why are some people opposed to the California ban? What would these opponents prefer to see?

1. What do we learn in the report about shark fin?

- Demand is increasing for it as the main ingredient in a Chinese delicacy, shark fin soup.
- This is due to Chinese becoming wealthier.
- Demand is driving market value upwards.
- Finning method of collecting fin involves throwing live sharks back into ocean to die.
- 85% of shark fin imported into US comes in (before the ban presumably) via California.

Have you ever tasted shark fin soup? Did you like it? Would you try it, if not? If not, why?

2. What do we learn about sharks in the report?

- Demand for shark fin is having devastating effects on the shark population.
- 73 million are killed each year just for their fins.
- Sharks are top predators.
- When the shark population is put at risk, the health of the ocean is also in danger.
- US forbids importation of sharks without fins. (*This seems to contradict what Betty Tsang says*)

Sharks have a reputation for attacking people. Have you ever seen a shark? Where? Were you scared of it?

3. We heard in the report about both supporters and opponents of banning shark fin. What opinions did they have? Which celebrities were mentioned? What have some other countries done to protect sharks?

- Celebrities were Chinese basketball star Yao Ming and British tycoon Richard Branson who have been campaigning for the Chinese to stop eating shark fin soup.
- Supporters of the ban included Sarah Sikich of Heal the Bay and Barbara Long of the Aquarium of the Pacific. They say the high numbers of sharks killed will affect marine ecosystems and it's the fin that's pushing up the price of shark, so that has to be targeted.
- Opponents say the ban is unfair (Ted Lieu) and wasteful (Betty Tsang). Unfair because there are many not-endangered species of shark that could be fished for their fins, and also sharks are still killed to make "fish and chips". Wasteful because the fins are now thrown back into the sea or used for dog food.
- 8 countries from Micronesia to Latin America have signed a UN agreement to set up shark sanctuaries.

What is your opinion? What do you think should happen?

B. Expanding on (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text

Topic = The role of celebrities in environmental and humanitarian issues.

1. The report mentioned Chinese basketball star Yao Ming and British tycoon Richard Branson, who have been campaigning for the Chinese to stop eating shark fin soup. Do you know of any other celebrities who have acted in a similar way? (Possible answers include: Annie Lennox - Amnesty International, Greenpeace, and Nelson Mandela's 46664 Foundation, HIV / Aids awareness in Africa; Bill Clinton - Clinton Foundation HIV and AIDS Initiative, Clinton Global Initiative for global public health, poverty alleviation, and religious and ethnic conflict; Paul McCartney - Adopt-A-Minefield, The Garland Appeal, a fund to aid cancer patients, Worldwide Orphans Foundation plus many others; Pierce Brosnan - several causes including clean air and water campaigns, marine mammal and wetland protection; Brad Pitt - Global Green, Jolie-Pitt Foundation, dedicated to eradicating extreme rural poverty, protecting natural resources and conserving wildlife, Princess Diana - landmines, etc. ...)
2. Have any celebrities in your country been involved in such causes? Who? What have they been involved with?
3. What is your opinion on these activities? Do they really make a difference? Do you think the celebrities are really concerned about the causes they support, or are they more like publicity stunts?

C. Extending discussion of (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text

Topic = Delicacies.

1. What are the famous delicacies in your country? Explain what they are to the others in your group. Could you prepare them? Have you eaten them?

2. Do you know of any delicacies in other countries? Do you know what kind of foods they are? Find out about as many as possible.

Country	Delicacy / famous dish	What it is
Russia	caviar	fish eggs
Scotland	haggis	sheep's offal, oatmeal encased in sheep's stomach
Mexico	guacamole tortillas tacos	spicy avocado dip pancakes crispy pancakes filled with meat etc
Italy	pizza	xxx
France	frogs legs truffles	xxx Fungus
Australia	kangaroo	xxx
China	shark fin soup bird's nest soup locusts xxx	xxx
Japan	sushi	raw fish
South Africa	biltong	dried spiced meat
xxx	xxx	xxx

3. Often such delicacies are very expensive. Would you pay to eat any of the above or other delicacies in a restaurant? Why / why not? Are you someone who always tries new foods or do you always stick to what you are familiar with?

Audioscript

It is an expensive delicacy in Chinese cooking that dates back hundreds of years. Shark fin soup has become increasingly popular as more Chinese are getting wealthy. But conservationists, like Sarah Sikich of Heal the Bay, say this dish is having devastating effects on the shark population.

"Up to seventy-three million sharks are killed each year for their fin alone."

Sikich says the practice of finning is popular among fishermen who would catch the shark, slice off the fin and throw the fish back into the ocean to die.

Barbara Long at the Aquarium of the Pacific says when the shark population is put at risk, the health of the ocean is also in danger.

"Sharks are a top predator and play a very vital role in marine ecosystems."

In Shanghai celebrities like Chinese basketball star Yao Ming and British tycoon Richard Branson have been campaigning for the Chinese to stop eating shark fin soup. US law makes it illegal for sharks without fins to be brought on shore. California now joins three other US states and Guam for even stricter regulations that ban the sale of shark fin, a commodity that is worth as much as \$700 a kilogram.

"Because the fin is driving the market value of the shark, it's most important to target that aspect. California is the leading importer of shark fin to the US. It's estimated that 85 percent of the shark fin that enters the US comes through California."

But opponents of the California ban say the law unfairly targets the Chinese community because it only bans shark fin and not the entire shark. California State Senator Ted Lieu voted against the ban.

"You can slaughter this highly vulnerable shark for fish and chips, but a Chinese restaurant couldn't take a shark fin from one of the hundreds of shark species [that] are nowhere near endangered and to me that is completely discriminatory and very unfair."

Betty Tsang of the Asian Food Trade Association says California's shark fin ban is also wasteful.

"If the fisherman or the fishery industry get the shark in and then now they have to take out the shark fin and throw it away, right? They have to, or feed it to the dogs or throw it back into the sea. This is a reverse."

Many opponents of the shark fin ban say they would support a ban on the entire shark. That's exactly what eight representatives ranging from Latin American countries to Micronesia have pledged. They recently signed a declaration at the United Nations to develop shark sanctuaries that would end the commercial fishing of sharks.

Elizabeth Lee for VOA News, Los Angeles.