

FACT SHEET

BLACKTIP SHARK

Carcharhinus limbatus

Family: Carcharhinidae

Other common names: Blackfin shark, Oceanic blacktip shark, Swarttiphaai

Description

A streamlined shark with a long, pointed snout, long gill slits and narrow, cusped upper teeth. Dark grey above and white below with no inter-dorsal ridge. Origin of the first dorsal fin is in line with the mid-point of the pectoral fin. Tips of dorsal, pectoral and pelvic fins and lower caudal lobe normally black. Marking clearer in juveniles but fading with age.

Distribution

Circumglobal in tropical and subtropical continental waters. In southern African waters found from Cape Point along the entire eastern seaboard into Mozambique.

Habitat

Found in coastal waters including the surf-zone, seldom found far offshore in deep water. Juveniles use shallow coastal waters as nursery areas.

Feeding

They feed mainly on fish such as sardines, mackerel and maasbanker.

Movement

They are believed to be migratory as there is no evidence of mating or pupping in South African waters and it is likely that this takes place in warmer waters along the Mozambique coast where juvenile blacktip catches are relatively common. However, tag-recapture data has shown evidence of site fidelity as some individuals can remain in the same locality for extended periods.

Reproduction

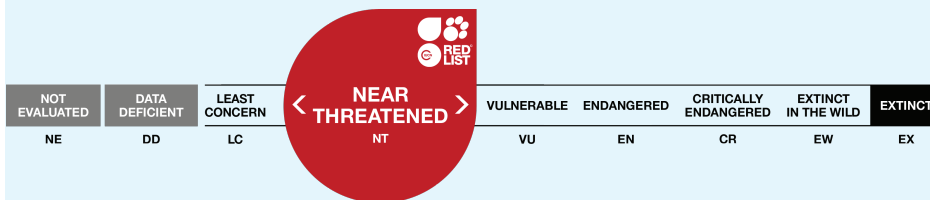
They reach maturity at a size of 150 cm precaudal length and an age of 6 years. Absence of mature sharks in mating condition along the KwaZulu-Natal coast suggests that mating and pupping takes place elsewhere, probably along the Mozambique coast. Mating appears to take place in summer and the gestation period is about 12 months. They are viviparous and produce litters of between 1-10 pups.

Age and growth

They can reach a maximum size of 195 cm precaudal length and a weight of 135 kg. They have been aged up to 20 years.

Current status

The current status of blacktip sharks in South African waters is not known. There was no significant trend in catches made by the KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board between 1978-2010. They have been evaluated as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List (2005). South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) List: Not assessed.



Capture

No directed commercial fishery for this species in South Africa but they are caught in the protective gill nets (shark nets) off KwaZulu-Natal beaches. Targeted by competitive shore anglers along the KwaZulu-Natal and Transkei coast but most are released. Blacktip sharks are strong fighters and will often jump and spin when hooked on a line. They are believed to be responsible for much depredation of hooked linefish in KwaZulu-Natal waters.

Current recreational fishing regulations

Daily bag limit: 1 per person per day
Minimum size limit: None
Closed Season: None
Other regulations: None
Marine protected areas (MPAs): It is likely that large no-take MPAs in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape provide some protection for this species. They are abundant in both the Aliwal Shoal and Protea Banks MPAs where they provide one of the focal species for the shark diving industry.

Reference

Information from the ORI Fish App. www.saambr.org.za



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