

Historic Fishery Interactions with White Sharks in the Southern California Bight

ABSTRACT

The degree to which White Sharks (*Carcharodon carcharias*) have interacted with various fisheries in Southern California is unknown, despite their high public interest and recent protection under state, federal, and international regulations. Data on White Shark fishery interactions in Southern California were mined from news reports, state and federal management agencies, sherman logbooks, and research institutions. Of the 369 records of reported White Shark catch between 1936 and 2009, 39% were categorized as young of the year (YOY), 21% as juveniles, 5% as subadult/adults, and the remaining 35% were of unreported size. YOY sharks were caught in nearshore waters (<50-m depth) more often than adult sharks, which were mainly caught in offshore waters (>50-m depth). In addition, entangling net fisheries (e.g., trammel nets, set and drift gillnets) caught more White Sharks (81%) than other fisheries (purse seine, trawl, set line, hook-and-line, harpoon, etc.). Incidental reported catch rates of YOY and juvenile White Sharks have increased in Southern California since the California nearshore-gillnet ban in 1994 and regulation of the offshore drift gillnet fishery, despite a significant decrease in overall gillnet fishing effort since the mid-1990s. This suggests that the White Shark population off California may be increasing because of reduced nearshore gillnet fishing effort and harvest protection in state and federal waters.

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