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## Experts fear decline of Ocean Predator

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A truck full of sharks heading to market to be finned in the red sea port of Hodeidah, Yemen. Photograph: Paul Hilton/EPA

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Sharks are the boogeymen of the animal kingdom. An Animal that beach lovers can never truly protect themselves from. The potential ease at which they could kill an unsuspecting swimmer strikes fear in the hearts of many. Fear of sharks launched the success of movies, such as Jaws, and terrified swimmers for generations. However, the movies that portray these animals so negatively and inaccurately also captured the imagination of many including myself.

As a child growing up I became obsessed with the movie Jaws.

was the coolest thing I had ever seen at 8 years old. It lead me to push my love of dinosaurs and power rangers aside and focus intently on learning more about sharks. 14 years, hundreds of books, countless hours of web browsing, and many documentaries later and my Appreciation for this animal remains the same at 22 as it did at 8. My appreciation of the animal has also caused me to become aware of an issue that is often overlooked. Despite sharks being seen as dangerous to humans, the reality is that humans are more dangerous to sharks then the apex predator of the ocean will ever be to them.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature has put forth disturbing information regarding the populations of more than 64 sharks species. Speices, such as the Blue shark and Basking shark, were labeled as threatened or vulnerable to global extinction. The initial addition of sharks to the organization's list of animals risk to extinction happened in 2009. Estimates of sharks killed annually by humans coming in at 100 million a year. The National Geographic website states that on average " Only 5 people die from shark attacks yearly". For every person who is killed by a shark a near 20 million are killed by

in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 2013 put a limit on the amount of the capture of several species of sharks and rays. The hope it that with this restrictions in place the shark population will stop declining. I think it's a great step in the right direction but the problem is that we rarely as species put the lives of other species in before the allure of money.

Finning is a bloody and often seen a cruel method favored by Fisherman to harvest the most valuable part of the shark. A shark caught is stripped solely of its fins that are cut off for their extreme price per pound value as opposed to the rest of the shark. Once it is stripped of its fins it is thrown back, often alive, into the ocean where its bleeds and suffocates to death. The reasoning behind the practice is it saves room on fishing boats. With more room greater amounts of fish can be stored making finning extremely profitable. This method raises the question as to who exactly is consuming shark meat? I have never been to a place where the delicacy was offered in my entire life. However, a simple google search will give you the tremendous history and cultural significance the dish holds in China

Unless you have been

This that inspired fear i thought China has a booming middle class. This has increased the demand of a popular status symbol meal known as shark fin soup. The infatuation with this meal has fueled the price of the dish that the national geographic reports "can sell for as much as \$100". The dish has been popularized for over a millennium in Chinese culture. It serves as the perfect way for the people of the nation to showcase their new found wealth. It's similar to any of us going out to a good steakhouse and ordering a filet mignon. The problem is that this gourmet meal gives way to unsustainable fishing practices that have caused some shark species to be labeled endangered.

Humans. Just recently the Convention on International

disconnected from the world for the past 30 years you know that