

## Fact Sheet

### Bigeye Thresher Shark (*Alopias superciliosus*)

**Life History & Habits:** Thresher sharks are highly migratory sharks distinguished by long, scythe-like tails. The bigeye thresher, one of three species in the family Alopiidae, is found nearly worldwide in warm, temperate and tropical oceanic and coastal waters to depths of 150 meters.

Bigeye thresher sharks are particularly slow to reproduce, even when compared to other sharks. The following life history characteristics make bigeye threshers highly susceptible to overfishing and depletion:

Maturity in females:	12 - 14 years, 332 - 341cm.
Maturity in males:	9 - 10 years at 270 - 288cm.
Gestation period:	12 months
Litter size:	2 young
Size at birth:	145 - 149cm on average
Lifespan:	20 - 21 years



Thresher sharks are known to use their long tails to corral, disorient, and stun their prey (schooling fishes & pelagic invertebrates). Like many other species of sharks, bigeye threshers segregate by size and sex.

**Threats & Risk:** Evaluation of catch rate data shows apparent declines in abundance of several Atlantic pelagic sharks, including the bigeye thresher. The bigeye thresher shark is not commercially important, but ICCAT Parties have reported the capture of this species in longline, gillnet and harpoon fisheries. The IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) classifies the bigeye thresher shark as *Vulnerable* to extinction on a global scale.

In 2008, the ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) and scientists convened by the Lenfest Ocean Program conducted Ecological Risk Assessments for sharks taken in ICCAT fisheries and found bigeye threshers to have exceptionally high vulnerability to pelagic fishing pressure and exceptionally low biological productivity (substantially lower than the other species examined).

**Fisheries Management:** Bigeye threshers are included in the “highly migratory species” under Annex I of the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea and are therefore subject to its provisions. There are, however, no international restrictions on catch of this or any other oceanic shark species. The United States prohibits the retention of bigeye thresher sharks in Atlantic fisheries.



#### Conservation Recommendations:

The SCRS identified the bigeye thresher as a species of high concern and suggested that a prohibition on landings would be effective for conservation, based on ease of identification, low commercial importance, and relatively high post-release survival. The expert panel convened by the Lenfest Ocean Program recommended that ICCAT prohibit landings of bigeye threshers. The Shark Alliance supports this advice and encourages ICCAT to adopt binding measures to this effect this year.