

**REPORT TO THE SCRS ON THE INTERNATIONAL PELAGIC SHARK WORKSHOP
(MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA, FEB. 14-17, 2000)**

by

Peter Miyake, ICCAT Assistant Executive Secretary

This Workshop was organized by Ocean Wildlife Campaign and several associated NGO's. ICCAT has been invited to participate at the Workshop and following the decision by 1999 SCRS, several scientists involved in ICCAT research actively participated this session, including the Convener of the Sub-Committee on By-catches, J. Cramer, J. Hoey, F. Hazin, B. Serret and Assistant Executive Secretary. The meeting was very well organized with over 100 participants from various fields and sectors of the world.

The agenda were divided into three Sessions:

Trends in abundance of pelagic sharks and history of their fisheries.

Life history, stock structure and movement.

Assessment methods and management strategies for pelagic sharks.

It became very clear that the majority of mortality of pelagic sharks come from tuna incidental or by-catches. Therefore, the catch records by tuna fleets are the major source of information (including dead and live discards, separately). The data appear to be more abundant with blue shark.

The contribution of ICCAT scientists were mostly on biology and stock assessments of pelagic sharks. My presentations included the function and development of ICCAT shark studies and the current status of progress made. It was surprising that ICCAT work has been drawing a lot of attention of shark researchers and ICCAT was considered as a front runner and a modelcase of any Regional Agencies' involvement in shark studies, while there are some criticism against the work by ICCAT in general.

It was found that much information are available but scattered in various laboratories. Many work has been done but on local scale and much international collaboration is needed for pelagic sharks. Among all the data, the total catch is found to be not adequate and importance of historical series was emphasized. All the trials of stock assessments of pelagic sharks indicated that there has been no trends in stock abundance.

The Workshop adopted a resolution to endorse the FAO International Plan of Action on the Management of Sharks. While doing so, several people wanted to add some arguments which were either included already in the Plan or some new elements. The Workshop considered it not to be useful to add these new arguments in the resolution and only resolved to endorse the IPOA and requested Nationals, FAO and Regional Agencies to implement the IPOA. IATTC and NAFO were identified officially endorsing FAO IPOA, while ICCAT was identified starting already steps in the plan.

The conclusions were as follows:

- There are a lot of information available on pelagic sharks, including biology (growth, longevity, reproduction, stock structure etc.) and fisheries.
- Many genetic studies and considerable amount of tag release and recovery data exist but no systematic studies of stock structure and migration have been made. This requires a good international collaboration.

- Catch data exist but total amount of removal of sharks are not well known. Particularly historic catch data should be estimated for major species. In this respect, investigation of mortality of live discards are recommended.
- The Workshop noted that most information are available for blue sharks, followed by porbeagle and then shortfin mako. It was confirmed that the priority of research must be given also in that order.
- It was noted that all these knowledge and information had been very much localized, and that for the comprehensive stock assessments, we do need to centralize information. Much of the international collaboration will be required and ICCAT has been requested, and we offered to be the vehicle for such work in the Atlantic pelagic sharks, if all the scientists collaborate and provide data to the ICCAT. It was suggested that ICCAT might consider blue shark stock assessment session in 2002.
- The proceedings of the Workshop will be published, including essences of some of the papers presented. ICCAT was requested to provide with texts for section of Atlantic on data collection and also as a case study for management option for Atlantic Ocean.
- Studies on technology to reduce by-catch were presented and further studies were encouraged.
- Workshop adopted a resolution endorsing the FAO Plan of Action on management of sharks and requested Nations, Regional Agencies and FAO implement the Plan.
- Some other studies recommended include; further stock structure studies through genetic and tagging, many biological studies, and non-conventional stock assessments methods (e.g. eco-system models).

My general conclusion is that the contribution made by ICCAT scientists was very noticeable and appreciated. Much was expected with ICCAT work and since tuna by-catches are major concern, the ICCAT must take the advantage of all the data accumulated in past for its work.