



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

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Concluding the busiest year on record, the shark fishery supplied three-fourths of the vitamin A used in the United States in 1943 and provided choice steaks and fillets that were eaten by thousands of Americans who had never before thought of a shark as food, the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries reported today.

Only recently neglected as worthless, sharks have now become one of the most important products of the U. S. fisheries, largely because of their value as a source of vitamin A, but in recent months increasingly prized as a food. One species--the soupfin shark--sells for a higher average price in the Seattle wholesale market than any other fish except Chinook salmon.

With the demand greater than fishermen can supply, more than a million and a half pounds of dressed soupfin shark were landed in Seattle during 1943--more than eight times as much as the preceding year. Chicago, important inland market for shark from both coasts, received 100,000 pounds. New York and other eastern cities have received shark meat from the Atlantic coast, where Florida is the chief producing center.

The catch of sharks usually amounts to about 15,000,000 pounds annually--mostly taken on the Pacific coast--but in the past it has been common practice to throw away the carcasses at sea after removing the valuable livers. Use of the shark meat--which tastes surprisingly like hadsock--began on a large scale only within the past year. In California, however, some use of sharks as food has been made for many years.

Although sharks are closely related to fish, scientists do not class them as true fish because their skeleton consists of cartilage instead of bone. There are more than 70 known species of sharks in North American waters, but only about a dozen are caught in important quantities.

Shark livers now make up more than 50 percent of the quantity of fish livers obtained for processing by the vitamin industry. However, because of the extremely high potency of the liver oils from certain species, sharks furnish about 75 percent of the vitamin A produced in the United States.

Most important commercial source of vitamin A is the soupfin shark, which has a very large liver. Soupfin liver oil has a higher vitamin A potency than any other oil available in large quantities to U. S. fishermen, at certain seasons of the year running as high as 200,000 units per gram. Livers of dogfish, a small kind of shark, yield a less potent oil--5,000 to 30,000 units per gram--and most other sharks average about 5,000. Codliver oil, long the principal source of vitamin A, yields about 3,000 units.

Domestic production of vitamin oils has increased greatly during the past two or three years because of the cutting off of European imports--chiefly from Norway--and the accelerated demand for vitamin A for Government purchase and by civilian consumers.