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"Fishing for Sharks"

Powell, Miles



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Today, the most potent symbol for shark conservation is arguably that of a finned shark—staring out helplessly from black eyes with its appendages sliced off for use in a soup prized in Chinese cuisine before its body is tossed back into the ocean, dead or alive. Despite receiving far less attention, sportfishing also poses a growing threat to these creatures. By tracing the historical

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origins of this pursuit, we can better understand its internal dynamics and ecological ramifications. In the early twentieth century, with entrepreneurs already having established industrial fisheries to convert shark bodies into commodities such as leather, oil, and meat, anglers found a new value for sharks as sources of recreation. They suggested that certain shark species constituted outstanding big game fish, stressing their spectacular fighting ability and the added benefit of ridding the waters of a menace. Despite the conservationist ethos and reverence for nature held by many proponents of sportfishing, angling for sharks often proved ecologically disastrous. At the same time, the claims of some recreational shark fishers that rescuing bathers justified depleting shark populations do not align with historical records of fatal human encounters with sharks. (From the article)

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