

ETHICAL CATCH AND RELEASE OF SHARKS

Anglers are prohibited from landing and keeping protected sharks, including sand tiger and sandbar sharks. Due to their low reproductive rate and overfishing, possession of either species is prohibited. Prohibited sharks and all Highly Migratory Species that are not retained must be immediately released to ensure the maximum probability of survival, by cutting the line near the hook or by using a de-hooking device, in either case, without removing the fish from the water. Corrodible, non-offset circle hooks are required to fish for shark, except when using flies or artificial lures.

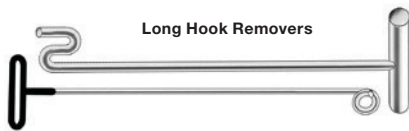
ETHICAL SHARK FISHING PRACTICES

- Use non-offset **carbon or mild steel hooks** (not stainless steel) with minimal protective coating. This way, if the shark is lost before it is landed, the hook will rust out within a few weeks.
- Use **single barbless circle hooks**. If your hooks are not barbless, flatten the barb with a file or with pliers. The hook will disengage more easily if you file down the barb.
- Use “blocker-rigs” to keep the shark from being throat or gut hooked.
- Avoid removing sharks from water.
- **DO NOT** remove protected sharks from the water. Landing, attempting to land, possessing or removing any prohibited shark species from the water is illegal in Delaware.
- Use measuring devices that allow sharks to remain in the water. A leader clip attached to a marked or measured line with a trailing float works well. A marked or measured stick or boat pole can also be useful.
- A number of hook removal devices are commercially available that can improve hook removal efficiency and safety.
- Use heavy sized tackle and minimize fighting time.
- Strike quickly to ensure the hook attaches in the corner of the shark’s mouth and the shark does not swallow your bait. If the shark is gut hooked, do not attempt to pull/tear/remove the hook. Cut the line as close to the hook as possible.
- **Avoid using a gaff**, especially near sensitive areas such as the brain, belly, dorsal fin, and tail area where there are major blood vessels close to the shark’s skin surface.
- Never lift a shark by its tail without providing additional support. Take care not to squeeze the gills as these delicate structures can be easily damaged.



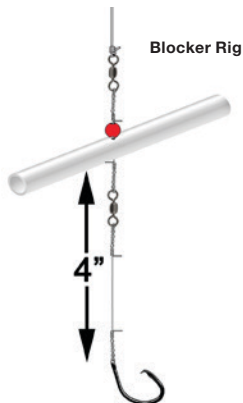
HOOK REMOVERS

Use a long **hook remover** for throat hooked sharks. If the shark has swallowed the hook, **do not attempt to pull it out** — this will cause serious damage and compromise the survival of the shark. Cut the line **as close to the hook as possible** if you are unable to remove the hook.



BLOCKER RIG

The “**blocker-rig**”, is nothing more than a length of plastic pipe mounted perpendicular to the leader at a specific distance from the hook. The pipe prevents or “blocks” the fish from swallowing the bait. The distance between the eye of the hook and the plastic pipe should be 4 inches, as that measurement is important to keep the hook from being swallowed by most of the sharks anglers will encounter. The length of the pipe should be 9 inches, unless anglers are expecting sand tigers and then it should be 14 inches.



FIGHT TIME

The longer the fight time, the longer it will take for your shark to recover. Sharks suffer lactic acid and carbon dioxide build-up in their blood and muscles, similar to how your muscles stiffen after a work-out. Such exhaustion weakens the animal and compromises its survival chances significantly. **Use heavy tackle to minimize fight time.**

BOLT CUTTERS

Don’t leave home without them! If the hook is embedded in the cartilage of the jaw and it is not an easy removal, use bolt cutters to cut the hook. Use wire cutter for small hooks and wire leaders.

HANDLING FOR A HEALTHY RELEASE

Do not drag larger sharks over rocks, sand, or the side of a boat. Sharks do not have a rigid skeleton to prevent their organs from being crushed by their own body weight while out of the water. Work with the sharks in the water. Never pull a shark by the tail or pick it up by the gill slits. Do not lift hammerhead sharks by the sides of their heads, as the area contains many sensitive organs, vital to successful hunting. Larger sharks will require two people to restrain and carry the animal. If possible, use a cradle to stabilize the shark in the water and to facilitate safe hook removal.

Blocker Rig Hooked Sand Tiger Shark



Photo Courtesy
Captain Mark Sampson