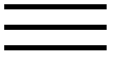


Seychelles: A case study of community involvement in the development of whale shark ecotourism and its socio-economic impact.

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Fisheries Research

Volume 84, Issue 1, March 2007, Pages 109-113

Seychelles: A case study of community involvement in the development of whale shark ecotourism and its socio-economic impact

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fishres.2006.11.018>

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Abstract

Whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*) have long been known to the local community of Seychelles, especially the fishers, but the sharks have never been exploited there as a food resource. The growing interest in the species by visitors to the islands prompted a more pro-active management approach in response to an initial pilot monitoring programme.

The stakeholder driven process involving dive and boat operators, conservation organizations and governmental agencies that instigated a nation wide monitoring network is described and the feedback to the public and stakeholders is illustrated. The

network is described and the feedback to the public and stakeholders is illustrated. The development and adoption of a code of conduct for whale shark encounters to enable the sustainable use of whale sharks as an ecotourism resource is described.

Published estimates of the worth of whale sharks as an ecotourism resource in Seychelles forecast a potential value of up to US\$4.99m for a 14-week season; these are reviewed and compared to actual revenues realised by the fledgling whale shark ecotourism activities. The direct links and spin-offs of these commercial activities to the on-going research programme and the mutual benefits are discussed.



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Keywords

Whale shark; *Rhincodon typus*; Ecotourism; Sustainable use

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