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# Introduction

Take a journey of imagination on an African Safari; you are pursuing one of the most dangerous creatures on earth, the African lion. Your heart pounds as that vicious, ruthless beast stares you straight in the eye. Meeting his unwavering gaze with your own determined glare, you whip out your weapon and take the ferocious monster down. You can't hunt lions anymore, but you can still experience the adrenaline rush of squaring off with a predatory brute. Shark fishing, the last frontier for the truly wild animal hunt, can provide the thrill of your life.

Watch your favorite action film's most electrifying scene, and imagine being a part of the action. You might be a dragon-slayer, a lone warrior questing to unfamiliar territory to challenge the ruthless behemoth that reigns over an entire city. With a sturdy shield, a faithful sword and a trusty steed, you adventure forth to conquer the beast.

Shark fishing electrifies you in the same way. Your boat is your chariot, your motors are your steeds, your gaff is your sword, and your rod is your shield. The "dragon" is a 1,000 pound gargantuan shark with guillotine jaws. Lured from the depths of the sea and tricked into biting your hook, this unpredictable opponent duels with incredible power. You're on his turf, and he's pretty confident you don't stand a chance. In a brain versus brawn battle, you engage a creature from the top of the food chain, whose speed and power rules the sea.

No one knows everything there is to know about shark fishing, but as one who challenges these monsters and wins, I can offer you some valuable advice. This book is designed to help you understand the sport of shark fishing, improve your catches and possibly even save your life. Though it is my personal passion to catch these leviathans of the ocean, I have a huge amount of respect for them. Shark fishing is about the excitement of the entire experience, not just catching trophies and dinner. I release most of my catches. Always remember while you're in the water that the ecosystem is a very delicate environment and it should be treated with care and respect. Please fish responsibly.

Almost every tool used in the sport is sharp: hooks, gaffs, tag poles, knives, bait needles and more. Sharks have extremely sharp teeth and immense strength. Add a rocking boat to the equation and the chance of an accident is likely every time you go out to sea. In the United States, fishing is the number one sport with the largest number of participants; it also has the most injuries and accidents. Because of this, safety is always my number one concern; this book is infused with safety tips.

Helpful and necessary equipment is listed throughout this book. I do not endorse any of these products, make no guarantee of how they will perform for you, and am not liable for any damage you receive while using them. I am not responsible for any injuries caused by sharks or fishing for sharks. Reading this book doesn't ensure protection against injury or harm.

In my 25 years of shark fishing, I've perfected my techniques and gear. After trying numerous other methods, reading countless books and magazines, watching videos, attending seminars, and tweaking my gear, I've figured out what works and what doesn't. Coupled with my own tactics and experience, I've come up with a near-perfect system. This book will teach you techniques that utilize the latest technologies, such as internet, satellites, weather maps, thermal equipment, electronics, and electronic attractant devices, plus safety equipment that are better than ever before. It will show you how to read the sky and water utilizing this

new technology. In the last seven tournaments I fished, I placed seven times using the techniques shown in this book.

Anyone can take a bucket of bloody chum, throw it in the water, and hope for Jaws to swim up to the boat. It's not likely, but if it does happen, the odds are that you and your equipment won't be ready. This book is based on 25 years of solid experience; take my success and my trials and errors into consideration and you will definitely be better prepared for big game shark fishing.

Good luck and happy hunting,  
Mike Schmidt

## The Mako Shark

In sports, which has a greater draw -- professional sports or amateur sports? Which is more captivating, big leagues or minor leagues? In this competitive world, you're always drawn to the best of the best. When it comes to fishing for sharks, Makos are the best.

Mako sharks are very fast fish. They are quick thinkers and quick to adapt to their environment and circumstances. They demonstrate an attitude. They are at the top of the food chain, an apex predator. Their warm-blooded bodies (unlike other species of sharks) turn them into the ferocious hunters, worthy opponents for any man.

Makos are not your typical sharks. Just looking for Makos is a superior challenge. They can be very hard to find. You have to *hunt* them by finding their feeding areas. You have to think like a Mako to find a Mako, which makes the hunt challenging.

Once you do find Makos, things get interesting. Your quarry may size you up, recognize the danger of the situation and not get tricked into biting your hook. When you do manage to hook one, he may turn on you, charge your boat, and take a few bites out of the hull. Once hooked, unlike other sharks, Makos will come after their tormenters instead of just trying to get away.

Makos seem to possess an intellect that is greater than other sharks and big game fish. When you fight a Mako, you can see it pause to think, examine the area, and plan its next move. This results in spectacular battles!

Blue sharks are known as blue dogs and thresher sharks are known as bulls of the sea. Makos are living, breathing, sea monsters, with the intelligence and tenacity to enforce their own will. They are worthy opponents for any sport fisherman.



*The Mako Shark*

The Mako shark is one of the oldest creatures in the sea, predating the dinosaurs. The Shortfin Mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) has prowled the oceans for millions of years.

Makos are often called the mackerel or bonito shark. The largest Mako caught off the U.S. West Coast was 351 cm (11.5 feet). The typical size of west coast Makos ranges from 213-244 cm (6-7 ft) but they can reach a size of up to 364 cm (143 inches).

The streamlined body of the Mako shark makes it a very graceful and speedy shark. Makos are the fastest sharks, capable of attaining speeds of up to 60 miles per hour. The Mako holds the speed record for long distance travel, approximately 2130 km (1320 miles) in 37 days, and an average of about 58 km (36 miles) per day.

The Mako's luminous, metallic-cobalt color and their pointed snout are distinctive features. Their swimming pattern is also unique. Unlike other sharks, the Mako is warm-blooded, which allows for heat retention from muscular activity. Being warm-blooded allows the Mako to utilize their muscle mass more efficiently, resulting in faster swimming speeds.

Mako sharks are able to maintain body temperatures greater than that of the water in which they swim. In order to maintain a warm body in cold water, Makos assert a high level of activity and ingest large quantities of food. It's common to land Makos with huge masses of food (sea lions, dolphins, or tuna) in their stomach; yet they still pursue an angler's small mackerel.



*Makos eat a large variety of food. It's not uncommon to find assorted mammal parts or other creatures lodged within your catch. This 815 lb Mako had part of an elephant seal inside.*



*A piece of a seal was found inside this 601 lb Mako.*





*An appetizer of eels was found inside this 387 lb Mako.*



Sharks are the only fish whose skeletal structure is comprised solely of cartilage; they have no bones. Since cartilage is lighter than bone, sharks have extreme flexibility. This flexibility gives Makos the ability to pursue prey, evade predators and to skillfully leap out of the water. Due to its beauty, aggressiveness, and jumping ability, the Mako shark is considered one of the great game fishes of the world.

## Anatomy

Mako sharks have many characteristics that help distinguish them from other species of sharks. The Mako has a pointed snout, which no other shark possesses, and its dorsal and pectoral fins lay completely perpendicular to its body (most species of sharks have downward-sloping fins). The Mako's tail appears almost bilateral and it possesses a keel. Makos have a lateral line that traverses their entire body; part of their sensory system, the lateral line allows the Mako to orient to movement and sound. The Mako has five gill slits, and large, dark black eyes. Makos are extremely hydrodynamic; their streamlined body makes them easy to identify.

**Can you tell the difference between a White, Mako, Blue, Black Tip and a Bull shark?**

*With a bit of practice, the Mako's distinctive features make it easy to discern from other shark species.*



1



2



3



4



5



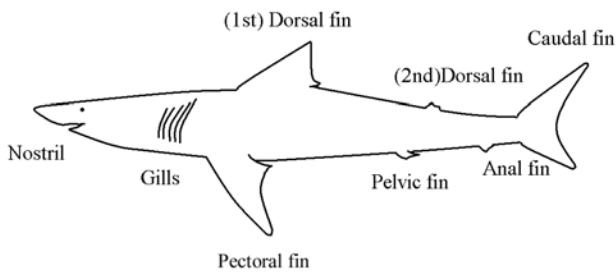
6

*Number 1 is a Mako, 2 is a Bull, 3 is a Mako, 4 is a White, 5 is a Blue, & 6 is a Black Tip.*

Male Makos have claspers (elongated pelvic fin edges), which are used for reproduction. Females have cloacae, openings that serve digestive and reproductive functions. Claspers are absent on the female Mako. Recognizing these differences can help you determine if your catch is male or female.

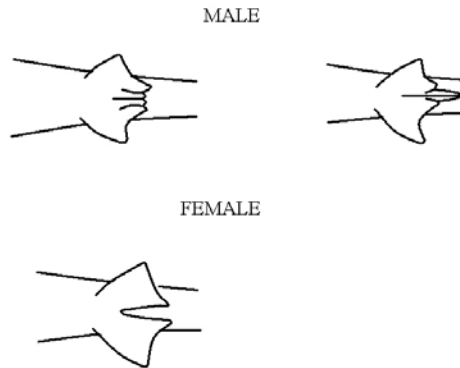
### HOW TO DISTINGUISH MALE AND FEMALE SHARKS

#### ANATOMY OF A SHARK



#### JUVENILE CLASPERS

#### ADULT CLASPERS



The skin on sharks consists of plate-like scales (dermal denticles) and a cartilaginous framework. When rubbed from the head to tail, shark's hide feels smooth. When rubbed the opposite direction (tail to head), it feels rough and jagged, like a saw blade.

Sharks have a never-ending supply of teeth, with five to fifteen rows inside their gums. Makos are unique; their teeth stick straight out.



Rows of teeth



Female

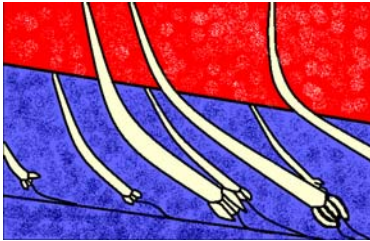


Male

The tail on Mako sharks is also unique, because of its height to length ratio. The Mako's tail works like a propeller, producing maximum thrust with minimum drag. This unusual tail provides almost all of the Mako's propulsion. The Mako shark has a predominate keel at the base of the tail. The keel is an easy way to identify a Mako from a Blue shark.



The Mako's highly-developed sense of smell occupies two-thirds of its brain. Makos can detect one part of blood per million parts of water using their ampullae of Lorenzini (small, sensory pores). This sensory network covers the shark's body, but is concentrated on the head and snout. The ampullae detect magnetic fields in close proximity to the shark, enabling the shark to locate prey and to deftly navigate through crowded waters.



*Ampullae of Lorenzini*

Ampullae locate even the weakest electrical impulses, like those of boat propellers, which attract Makos. The boat's battery connects to the engine, which grounds in the water, releasing electrical impulses that will attract the sharks to the boat.

Sharks also have keen hearing and detect minute sounds from great distances. Their sensitive hearing attracts them to low-frequency vibrations like a wounded fish or a ship's propeller.

Shark's sharp eyes amplify available light, allowing them to see at night or in low light levels. Their pupils expand and contract, controlling light intake. The eyes have a lens cover which slides over the eye for protection. This membrane slides over the eye just before sharks chomp on bait or other food. This is more noticeable in blue sharks than Makos, as Makos are more dauntless. Makos stare down their predators without fear.



## Distribution

Makos live in warm waters worldwide and are most abundant off the coast of California. Many of the West Coast catches in the United States consist of juvenile fish; some adult-sized males are caught, but adult females are rarely taken. Large catches typically occur around the Channel Islands and outer banks of the Southern California Bight, at the beginning and end of summer. Nursery habitat utilization appears concentrated in the Southern California Bight area, primarily south of Los Angeles toward the Mexico-California border.

The Shortfin Mako has a very wide distribution, and can be found all over the world. It ranges from California to Chile in the Pacific, and from the Grand Banks to the hump of Brazil (including the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea) in the Atlantic. Shortfin Makos are commonly sighted from Cape Cod to Cape Hatteras. In the eastern Atlantic, the Shortfin Mako ranges from Norway to South Africa (including the Mediterranean) and it is found throughout the Indian Ocean from South Africa to Australia. In the western Pacific, Makos range from Japan to New Zealand. In the central Pacific, it occurs from the Aleutian Islands to the Society Islands.

## Habitat

The Shortfin Mako is a true pelagic species, primarily found in cool to warm waters. Makos are able to elevate and maintain higher body temperatures. While Makos live primarily in tepid waters along current breaks, they head into the cold, inshore waters to feed on hefty, energy-rich fish and mammals.



*Makos are found in warm waters around the globe.*

Makos are found in temperatures as low as 56 degrees Fahrenheit and at depths of 30-60 m. They have been recorded as deep as 740 m. However, Shortfin Makos prefer water temperatures between 56 and 68°F, where they are most often caught by sport fisherman. They migrate seasonally to warmer waters (proven by tag and release studies). Very little is known about the social habits of the Shortfin Mako, except that it is a solitary shark.

## Behavior

Once you set a hook into a Mako, it's angry. Its survival instincts kick in, and all hell breaks loose. The Mako erupts wildly, rolling, shaking, diving, charging, and even leaping into the boat. Makos can leap as high as 30 feet out of the water. Once hooked, a Mako will often attack your boat. You'll feel like you've grabbed hold of the devil's tail when a Mako stares you down with its dark, pitiless eyes.

At the top of the food chain, these apex predators fall prey only to humans. Many falsely believe Makos are nocturnal feeders; long-lining day catches (vs. night catches) suggest the species feeds predominantly during daylight hours. While I've done my share of night fishing, most of my catches (especially larger ones) have occurred during the day. Makos feed on Mackerel, Bonitoes, Tuna, Marlin, Swordfish, Mola Mola, other sharks (including juvenile Makos), Squid, and the occasional marine mammal or Sea Turtle.

Not much is known about the mating habits of Makos, as they don't mate often, and it's yet to be witnessed. We do know though that when mating, male Makos grab their partner with their teeth, scarring them in the process. For this reason, female Makos have thicker skin than males.



*515 pound female Mako with bite marks from mating.*

Female Makos deliver via live birth, and can bear as many as 16 pups in a litter. The typical newborn pup measures 27 to 28 inches in length. Typical mature males measure about two meters (6.5 ft.) long; mature females measure about 2.75 meters (9 ft), somewhat larger than males.

Since pregnant females often abort embryos upon capture, few specifics about reproduction are known. There is evidence suggesting a three year reproductive cycle, although a two year cycle cannot be ruled out. Young are born after a 15 to 18 month gestation period. The age of Makos can be determined by counting the number of rings in their cartilage, similar to calculating the age of a tree. They reach maturity in four to six years, and have an average lifespan of 28 years.

Despite having two-thirds of their brain devoted to smell, Makos still have the ability to think and make judgments. These monster Makos don't become huge by being stupid. Spot a large Mako, and you will notice how it evaluates its situation and examines its locale. Makos are keenly intelligent creatures.

## Dangers

The Mako's power, speed, aggressiveness and large raptorial teeth make it a very dangerous quarry that invites respect. Makos attack (and sometimes kill) those who hunt them, bumping, biting, and leaping into boats. Shortfin Makos approach with their mouths open and swim in a figure eight pattern just before attacking.



*This shark was hauled in alive during a tournament to keep it from being eaten by blue sharks and thereby disqualified. It bit the rail padding and tried to take a few chunks out of its captor, me.*

Sharing the boat with a violent, thrashing Mako is an experience not soon forgotten. Makos are survivors and you have attacked them on their turf. Although the Mako is a fish, it is a potential killer.

## The Mako Shark

The Mako shark is a beautiful, fierce, fascinating animal. It provides a unique challenge for daring souls that seek extreme adventure. Knowledge of the Mako's habits and physiology, coupled with respect for its power and aggressiveness, will yield many successful expeditions.



## About the Author



Capt. Mike Schmidt has been fishing for sharks for more than a quarter of a century. His shark expertise is often called upon by researchers and media. He has placed in the Mako for Dollars, Pacific Coast Yacht Club, Mako My Night and the Mako Madness fishing tournaments, with several notable wins. He has won Mako Madness and Mako My Night tournament, in the most released fish division. His find and catch rate is very high and afforded several wins in that division. Schmidt served as Tournament Director for the 2003, 2004 and 2005 Mako for Dollars Tournament.

Capt. Mike Schmidt has done extensive work with juvenile great white sharks, placing satellite tags in the sharks and tracking them in the wild. Schmidt helped establish the Share the Shark Foundation, an organization dedicated to the distribution of shark meat to charities (including food banks and homeless shelters), allowing shark fishermen an avenue to contribute to their communities.

Capt. Mike Schmidt's articles and photos have appeared in magazines and internet publications across the continent. Schmidt produces the acclaimed shark fishing website, [www.Sharks.us](http://www.Sharks.us), which many tout as the world's #1 website for the sport.

For Schmidt the sport of shark fishing is about soul searching, the ocean's rejuvenating, positive energy, and becoming closer to God and His creations.

Schmidt resides in California with his wife, Bari, and his three sons, Dillon, Hunter, and Conner.

Capt. Mike Schmidt is available for speaking presentations and other engagements. To schedule, please contact: 1-800-766-3425 or send an email to: [Chum@Sharks.us](mailto:Chum@Sharks.us)