

Whale shark records and conservation status in Venezuela. Program Book and Abstracts of the 80<sup>th</sup>. Annual Meeting of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists. La Paz, B.C.S., México, June 14-20, p. 315 [with A. I. Agudo and C. Salazar] (abstract).

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\*ROMERO, A.; SALAZAR, C. G.; AGUDO, A. I.

(AR; CGS): Department of Biology and Environmental Studies Program, Macalester College, 1600 Grand Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105 (AIA): Fundacetacea, P.O. Box 010; Florianopolis; Santa Catarina- SC; Brazil.

### **Whale shark records and conservation status in Venezuela**

The number of records of whale sharks, *Rhincodon typus*, in Venezuelan waters reflect a geographical distribution that is congruent with areas and periods of high productivity. We provide evidence that this species is occasionally harpooned or accidentally netted in those waters, thus raising a concern for its conservation status. We propose long-term population and behavioral studies tracking individual animals to provide an accurate picture of the distribution and abundance of whale sharks not only in Venezuelan waters but worldwide. At the present time we advise that this species be classified as threatened based on the Precautionary Principle.

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