



FILM REVIEW: Sharkwater Extinction (Rob Stewart, 2018) USA

Description



ivers an unprecedented look into the global

decimation of the ocean's top predator, the shark. Stewart

opens *Sharkwater Extinction* in spectacular fashion with exquisite underwater cinematography showcasing the innate beauty of what lies below the ocean's surface. A voice-over narrator informs the viewer of the massive amount of shark being stripped from the planet's aquatic ecosystem. Stewart suggests that in the last 30 years sharks have been hunted losing 90% of their population. Moreover, 150 million sharks are killed every year with scientists only accounting for 70-80 million with the rest being killed, more than likely, by poachers. *Sharkwater Extinction* is a follow-up from

Stewart's 2006 film *Sharkwater*. *Sharkwater* brought to the public's consciousness the global shark epidemic created by the demand for a Chinese delicacy, Sharkfin Soup.

According to testimonials in *Sharkwater Extinction*, shark meat is the most toxic of fish meat as they are at the top of the predatory food chain. Nevertheless, shark meat has made its way into the world's food supply chain often being labeled as flake or blackfish among other names. In addition, shark meat was found in pet foods and in cosmetics. Sharks and shark fins are a high-dollar commodity and, with the Costa Rican government turning a blind eye, the industry is booming. With an investigative reporter's acumen, Stewart discovers a large number of fins are shipped, flown and stored in Costa Rica by a well-connected businessman who purportedly owns hotels, restaurants, docks, and boats. In addition, global mafia players use Costa Rica as a shipping hub much like a UPS or Fed Ex facility. Stewart also visits Panama, Miami and Los Angeles (Santa Monica Bay). Interestingly, Stewart shoots footage of a shark facility in Panama where a worker informs Stewart of shark fins to sell for \$5 and shark meat for fifty cents a pound. By the time the fin reaches mainland China the fin has a retail value of \$200.

I especially liked the opening scene of *Sharkwater Extinction* as we see a diver, Rob Stewart, the film's leading character, scuba diving with fish and sharks in a beautifully composed shot and there are many more exquisitely filmed underwater scenes. I also liked the testimonials from Stewart as he periodically directly addressed the camera on the situation in several regions around the globe beginning with Costa Rica. Moreover, I appreciated his informative approach as the Costa Rican government decides to no longer support the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), thereby allowing international cargo air shipments to resume further decimating the planet's shark population.

Shockingly, Stewart perishes in a diving mishap off the Florida Keys before the completion of *Sharkwater Extinction*. Nevertheless, Stewart delivers a hopeful message that we as a global force can right the ship and keep the 400-450-million-year-old top predator in existence continuing its role in safeguarding and keeping balance in the ocean's delicate eco-system. Stewart cites the rapid response from young activists in expanding shark protections after his 2006 *Sharkwater* and the implementation from governments around the globe in enacting legislation to protect the world's top predator. Unfortunately, the protections are no longer being fully enforced as the short-term economic benefits have clouded any longer-term visions. Through *Sharkwater Extinction*, Rob Stewart's voice lives on. Highly recommended viewing!

Category

1. television

Date Created

October 27, 2019

Author

hollywoodglee