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Food habits of the silky shark *Carcharhinus falciformis* (Müller & Henle, 1839) off the western coast of Baja California Sur, Mexico

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The objective of this study was to establish the trophic niche of the silky shark and to determine the ecological role of this predator in the ecosystem close to Baja California. The trophic spectrum was analyzed from samples taken during summer and autumn (2000–2002) from the fishing camps of Punta Lobos and Punta Belcher on the western coast of Baja California Sur. A total of 263 stomach contents were analyzed (143 with food; 120 empty). The index of relative importance (IRI) showed that at Punta Lobos, silky sharks fed mainly on red crabs *Pleuroncodes planipes* (%IRI = 83%), whereas at Punta Belcher the main food item was the jumbo squid *Dosidicus gigas* (%IRI = 41%), followed by chub mackerel *Scomber japonicus* (%IRI = 33%). According to the Levin Index (Bi), the trophic niche breadth in silky sharks is low (Bi = <0.6), which means that silky sharks are specialist predators because they mainly consume three prey types: red crab, chub mackerel, and jumbo squid. The Shannon-Wiener Index indicated that all trophic categories at Punta Belcher (0.85–1.22) had lower diversity than at Punta Lobos (0.50–1.6), because the silky shark feeds more on tropical prey found close to Punta Lobos. The Morisita-Horn Index (C