

SHARKS IN AUSSIE WATERS

There are considered to be around 180 species of sharks in Australian waters and 400 species worldwide. So we certainly have our fair share! Australia's sharks range from the world's largest, the whale shark, to one of the smallest, the pygmy shark, and of course, the equally fascinating and fearsome great white.

The Coral Sea, off the coast of Queensland, is a particular hotspot of shark diversity in Australia, with more than 50 species.

SHARKS COMMONLY FOUND OFF AUSTRALIA

Great White, Port Jackson, Thresher, Zebra Shark, Tiger Shark, Tasselled Wobbegong, Whale Shark, Oceanic Whitetip, Blacktip Reef, Grey Nurse, Bull Shark, Bronze Whaler, Great Hammerhead, Blind Shark, Pygmy Shark, White Tipped Reef Shark, Grey Reef Whaler, Short Fin Mako and Lemon Shark

GREAT WHITE (WHITE POINTER) SHARKS

Protected throughout Australian waters, the great white is the largest flesh-eating shark in the world. It favours cool, shallow, temperate seas, and is most commonly found in southern Australian waters from Exmouth, WA, to southern Queensland. Great whites feed on fish and marine mammals such as seals.

HUMAN IMPACT

Sharks around Australia are under threat from fishing, lethal shark control, habitat loss and pollution.

Around 60 species of sharks and rays found in Australian waters are listed as Endangered, Threatened or Vulnerable. However, only 15 of these are protected under Australian law, so populations are forecast to decline further. Although considered endangered internationally, school sharks are commonly sold as 'flake' in fish and chip shops throughout Australia.

SHARK LIFE CYCLE

Sharks live a long time (av. 20-30 years). Some, may live for up to 400 years!). They grow slowly and take a long time to mature and reach reproductive age. This means that even if we slow the decline in shark populations now, they may take a long time to recover.

SHARK HABITAT

Most sharks live in mild or warmer oceans. Other sharks occur in depths of up to 3000m. Smaller sharks tend to live at greater depth, while larger sharks, such as great whites, tiger sharks and whale sharks, travel more widely and have greater depth range. Bull sharks prefer to live in shallow coastal waters, estuaries and harbours of less than 30 m deep.



Great White/ White Pointer



Whale Shark

SHOULD I BE SCARED OF SHARKS?

No! We don't think you should be scared of sharks. Few species will attack humans and only if hungry, disturbed, or defending their territory. The ocean is the sharks' home. When we visit their home we need to be aware and respectful of them. To put things in perspective...

- On average, one person a year is killed in a shark attack in Australia
- 5 people die from falling out of bed
- 10 people are struck down by lightning

WHY WE NEED SHARKS

As apex predators, sharks help maintain the balance of life in the sea. They are a vital part of the food chain, controlling mid-sized predators and allowing small reef fish to thrive. Small reef fish take care of our amazing coral reef, therefore sharks help keep coral reef healthy. Without sharks, we would be denied the pleasure of exploring amazing underwater habitats such as the world's largest natural wonder, Queensland's Great Barrier Reef. The global economic impact on tourism and of declining fish stocks would be huge.

