

# WHAT'S THE SCOOP?



@sharkattackcampaign

www.sharkattackcampaign.co.za

# 16

## WHALE SHARK



The largest shark and fish in the ocean, exceeding 14m in length. Unlike most other sharks and rays (with the mouth on the underside) the mouth is terminal and is used to ingest huge volumes of water from which zooplankton, small fish and crustaceans such as mysids are filtered by gill arches modified to form giant sieves. This is the most fecund of the sharks and rays with litters of up to 300 embryos found in different stages of development.

Whale sharks spend most of the time in the epipelagic zone, but dive to at least 1,928m in depth.

Major contemporary threats to whale sharks include fisheries catches, bycatch in nets and vessel strikes. The species is listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Scientific Name:</b>   | <i>Rhincodon typus</i>  |
| <b>AKA:</b>   | Whale Shark   |
| <b>Ocean Hang out:</b>  | Mainly Indian Ocean, but occurs along the entire SA coast in open water |
| <b>Warm/Cool Waters:</b>  | Mainly warm; most common in the tropics                                 |
| <b>Diet:</b>  | Filters very small fish and crustaceans from the water column           |
| <b>Slow/ Fast:</b>  | Slow, often near the surface but can undertake deep dives               |
| <b>S/ M/ L/ XL/ XXL:</b>  | XXL   |
| <b>Shy/ Bold:</b>   | Shy   |
| <b>At the beach/ In the sea:</b><br>(Inhabits coastal or oceanic waters)                        | Coastal & Oceanic   |
| <b>Local/ International:</b> (Endemic/ Non-native)  | International in all tropical and warm temperate waters                 |
| <b>Nomadic/ Homely:</b> (Migratory or resident)   | Nomadic   |
| <b>Social/ Anti-social:</b> (Normally found in groups or solitary)                              | Anti-social - Solitary but aggregate when feeding                       |
| <b>Black Tie/ Eccentric:</b> (Easily recognisable as a shark or ray or has a unique appearance) | Eccentric   |
| <b>Teeth:</b>   | Very small non-functional teeth; relies on filter plates                |
| <b>Best Feature:</b>  | The largest fish in the ocean   |
| <b>Red Listing:</b>   | Endangered (IUCN 2016)  |