

WHAT'S THE SCOOP?



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SPOTTED RAGGED-TOOTH SHARK

Of all the larger sharks, this species is the most popular with recreational divers. Despite its gruesome appearance with a mouth bristling with sharp, needle-like teeth, it is extremely docile. It has the ability to pump water over its gills, so it doesn't have to keep moving to extract the necessary oxygen. In a bizarre twist the developing embryos cannibalise their smaller siblings which results in a litter of only two, one in each uterus. It reaches sexual maturity after 5 years and lives for about 40 years. It is found on the southern and eastern coasts of South Africa and aggregates in large numbers on coastal reefs. The spotted ragged-tooth shark also favours caves and overhangs to escape the water current.

It congregates to mate on the reefs in northern Eastern Cape and southern KwaZulu-Natal waters. Pregnant females then travel as far north as southern Mozambique to gestate (carry its foetus in the womb) in warmer waters and return after 9 to 12 months to give birth in the Eastern Cape.

Scientific Name:	<i>Carcharias taurus</i>
AKA:	Spotted Ragged-tooth
Ocean Hang out:	Indian and Atlantic, associated with coastal reefs
Warm/Cool Waters:	Favours cooler water but sometimes found in tropics
Diet:	Fish and small sharks
Slow/ Fast:	Slow, close to the bottom in and near reefs
S/ M/ L/ XL/ XXL:	L
Shy/ Bold:	Shy
At the beach/ In the sea: (Inhabits coastal or oceanic waters)	Close inshore, often caught by shore anglers; confined to shelf waters
Local/ International: (Endemic/ Non-native)	International, on the east coasts of many continents
Nomadic/ Homely: (Migratory or resident)	Nomadic
Social/ Anti-social: (Normally found in groups or solitary)	Very common, solitary but also in large packs
Black Tie/ Eccentric: (Easily recognisable as a shark or ray or has a unique appearance)	Black Tie
Teeth:	Triangular, serrated
Best Feature:	Swallows air to become positively buoyant
Red Listing:	Vulnerable, Critically Endangered in other areas (Ebert et al, 2013, Sharks of the World)