

WHAT'S THE SCOOP?



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ZAMBEZI SHARK

The Zambezi Shark, also known as a Bull Shark, is one of the most aggressive (with their prey) large shark species. In South Africa it is known as the Zambezi because it spends the first 2-3 years of its life in the estuaries of the Zambezi River and other large river systems. The Lake St Lucia estuarine system is probably the most important breeding ground for this species in South Africa. Historically the mouth of this system was kept open as a part of its management strategy which enabled pregnant females to enter the mouth to drop their young. A dramatic change in policy of non-interference by the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority has seen the mouth remain closed for many years, thereby preventing new-born Zambezi sharks from utilising the system as a nursery area. Other large systems in the east coast of South Africa, including Richards Bay and Umzimvubu may also act as nursery areas. Zambezi sharks give birth to live young. Litter sizes range from 1-13 sharks, with most between 6-8. The gestation period is 10-11 months, with birth normally occurring in late spring and summer. It prefers inshore and offshore reefs, the surf zone, estuaries and rivers. New-borns are confined to their nursery areas in coastal lagoons and estuaries. The diet of this species is relatively diverse, including turtles, birds, dolphins, terrestrial mammals, crustaceans, echinoderms, teleost fishes and elasmobranchs. However, the most diverse diet is restricted to larger individuals that are capable of consuming larger prey. The most eaten prey items are fish and small sharks and rays.



Scientific Name:	<i>Carcharhinus leucas</i>
AKA:	Zambezi shark/ Bull Shark
Ocean Hang out:	Indian, close inshore, often enters estuarine systems
Warm/Cool Waters:	Warm
Diet:	A variety of fish, rays and sharks
Slow/ Fast:	Slow but active swimmer, often found close to the bottom
S/ M/ L/ XL/ XXL:	L
Shy/ Bold:	Bold
At the beach/ In the sea: (Inhabits coastal or oceanic waters)	At the beach - inshore, including estuaries and lagoons; confined to continental shelf
Local/ International: (Endemic/ Non-native)	International in most tropical and warm temperate coastal waters
Nomadic/ Homely: (Migratory or resident)	Nomadic
Social/ Anti-social: (Normally found in groups or solitary)	Anti-social: Solitary but forms loose aggregations on selected reefs
Black Tie/ Eccentric: (Easily recognisable as a shark or ray or has a unique appearance)	Black Tie
Teeth:	Triangular, serrated teeth
Best Feature:	Male Zambezi sharks bite their partner to hang on during mating
Red Listing:	Near Threatened (2009)