



## Shark Species

### Common Human Encounters

Experts caution sea-goers to beware of sharks 6 feet or longer due to the damage they can cause to humans in a single bite. Among the species that grow to this size and have been known to attack humans are bull sharks, tiger sharks, and great white sharks. However, these are not the predominant shark species that a person is likely to come across in the surf zone at the beach in the United States. In fact, about 90 percent of human-shark encounters are with smaller species of sharks not normally implicated in fatal attacks.

One challenge in identifying sharks that attack humans is that people don't always get a good look at the shark in the water. Even if they do, they usually do not know what kind of shark it was. Often, experts use the bite pattern to determine the responsible species and are sometimes able to extract teeth samples from the bite area, which helps identify the species.

### Shark Species Most Commonly Found in the East Coast and Gulf of Mexico Surf Zone

- Blacktip Shark
- Blacknose Shark
- Atlantic Sharpnose Shark
- Spinner Shark
- Sand Tiger – often encountered by divers in deeper waters
- Finetooth Shark (below North Carolina)
- Lemon & Nurse Sharks (Florida Keys)
- Bonnethead (Gulf of Mexico)
- Bull Shark
- Tiger Shark
- Hammerhead Sharks
- Caribbean Reef Sharks

### Shark Species Most Commonly Found in the Surf Zone and Around Islands of the West Coast and Northern California

- Leopard Shark
- Smoothhound Shark
- Shovelnose Guitarfish
- Juvenile Thresher Shark
- Angel Shark (occasionally)
- Great White Shark (rare in surf except near seal or sea lion colonies)

### Shark Species Most Commonly Found in the Surf Zone, Hawaii

- Tiger Shark
- Gray Reef Shark
- Whitetip Reef Shark

### Perspective

Between 1670 and 2005, only **55** shark fatalities have been reported in the United States out of **911** total attacks.