

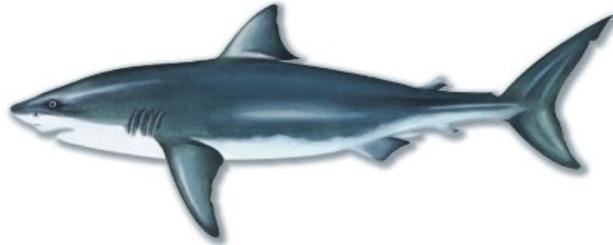


NOAA FISHERIES FACT SHEET



White Shark

White sharks are the top shark species implicated in unprovoked fatal attacks throughout the world.



Scientific name: *Carcharodon carcharias*

Distribution: Off the Atlantic coast of the United States white sharks are found from Newfoundland, Canada, to Florida and rarely in the Gulf of Mexico. Off the Pacific coast white sharks are found off the Hawaiian Islands in the central Pacific (relatively rare) and from southeast Alaska to California (rare in Alaskan and Canadian waters).

Habitat: This species can be found in coastal waters, along the continental shelf and islands (especially near seal or sea lion colonies), and offshore in the open ocean.

Life History: Female white sharks are believed to mature when they are about 13-14 feet and the smallest known free-swimming white shark measured approximately 4 feet. White sharks can reach sizes up to about 21 feet in length.

Management: In the Atlantic, white sharks are a prohibited species and if a white shark is caught, it must be released with a minimum amount of injury and without taking the animal out of the water. In the Pacific, California state regulations prohibit the taking of white sharks. Finning is prohibited for all shark species.

Fast Facts About Sharks

Sharks are **vulnerable** to fishing pressure because they:

- Grow slowly
- Take many years to mature (12 to 18 years in some species)
- Often reproduce only every other year
- Have few young per brood (only 2 pups in some species)
- Have specific requirements for nursery areas (bays and estuaries)
- Are caught in many types of fishing gear (hook and line, gillnets, longlines, trawls, etc.)

Sharks have **adaptations** allowing them to be apex predators including:

- Teeth that are continually replaced throughout their life
- Sensitive smell receptors
- Eyes that adapt quickly to low light levels
- Lateral line receptors that sense movement in the water
- Electroreceptors that detect electric and magnetic fields

What is an Apex Predator?

Sharks are considered apex predators because they prey on many species lower on the food chain, have few natural predators themselves, and are less abundant than their prey