

INFORMATION PAGE: Oceanic Whitetip Sharks

Oceanic whitetip sharks are so named because of the white tips on all of their rounded fins. These sharks can be found along the equator in warm tropical and subtropical waters. They are nicknamed the 'Dark Knights of the Ocean' as they prefer to hunt at night. Another popular nickname for the animal is the 'Sea Dog'. This is because, like a dog who follows its master, the sharks can often be spotted following fishing boats in the hope of a tasty supper.

The acute senses of a whitetip can not only lead it to its next meal, but often into danger. By following a fishing boat that is trailing a baited line in the ocean, the shark risks becoming injured by the hooks that skewer the fish. **Furthermore**, shark hunting boats are often patrolling near by, readying themselves to snatch the sharks from the ocean so that their fins can be turned into shark fin soup. Do the sharks have a future in our oceans?



Did you know?

Some scientists think that the white tips of the shark's fins trick larger fish into thinking that there is a school of smaller fish swimming close to the surface at night. As the larger fish investigate, the whitetip is able to get within striking distance and grab a mouthful.

What do all sharks have in common?

There are 5-10 different species of shark inhabiting the world's oceans and seas – from the mighty whale shark (reaching over 12 metres in length) to the tiny dwarf lantern shark that could sit comfortably in the palm of your hand. Despite this variety, what makes a shark a shark? What do they have in common with each other?

One of the main similarities is that all of these marine vertebrates have a skeleton made of cartilage & not bone. (This is similar to what a human's nose and ears are made of.)

In addition, all sharks have unique skin that is covered in tiny 'teeth'. This clever design reduces drag and enables the animals to swim faster.

Furthermore, these mainly cold-blooded creatures have gills on both sides of their head. The gills are packed with blood vessels, which absorb oxygen from the seawater.

These aren't the only the things that the apex predators have in common, but they do illustrate their winning body design – a design that has enabled the shark family to patrol the world's oceans and seas for millions of years.