

Whale shark
(*Rhincodon typus*)

HEALTHY REEFS NEED SHARKS

Healthy reefs provide us with immense natural wealth.
Sharks are crucial to the resilience and productivity of marine ecosystems.

Reefs Need Sharks Because...

They maintain the delicate balance in food-webs and support healthy fish stocks. Sharks generally eat large predatory fish which allows smaller, herbivorous fish and invertebrates to flourish. In turn, the herbivorous fish keep coral healthy and clean by eating the algae off coral, and thus help support a vibrant ecosystem.

Sharks Need Reefs Because...

They provide habitat and protection for smaller sharks and many other species. Some sharks rely on healthy reef habitats as breeding grounds and nurseries for their pups. Reefs also provide 'cleaning stations' where sharks can do a pit-stop and have parasites removed by other fish such as the cleaner wrasse.

We Need Sharks Because...

We depend on vibrant, healthy reefs that support coastal communities and a national economy through food security, tourism and recreation. Without sharks, not only does the ocean's health suffer, so does ours.

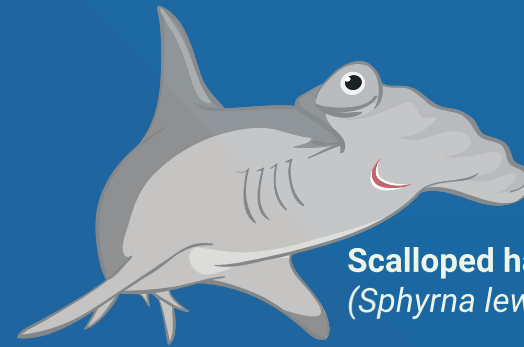
Why Are Sharks Under Threat?

Sharks are long-lived and reproduce slowly in low numbers. Most species generally take around 10 years to reach maturity and will produce up to 4-6 young every two years¹. This makes them vulnerable to overfishing and if their populations fall too low, they may not recover. This affects not only reef health, but people who depend on reefs for tourism and food.

Sharks are Climate Champions!

Sharks help us fight global warming by protecting seagrass from overgrazing by turtles and dugongs. Seagrass draws down carbon from the atmosphere faster and stores it for longer than forests on land, helping us fight global warming².

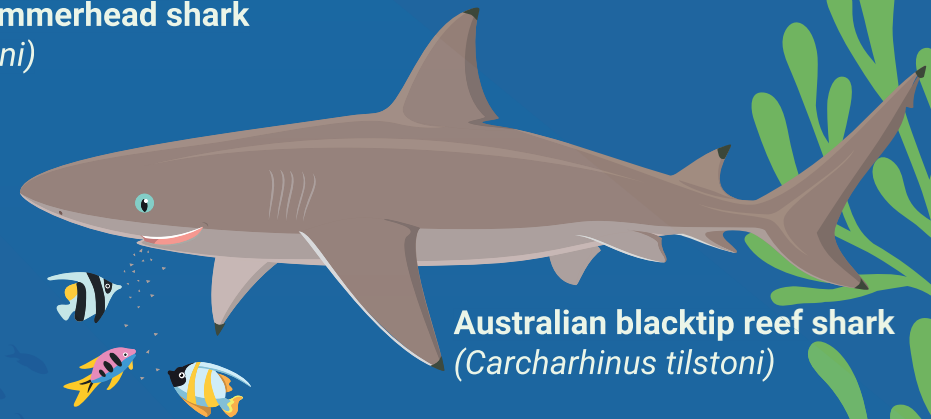
1. Heupel, MR, et al. (2018) Shark Action Plan Policy Report. Report to the National Environmental Science Program, Marine Biodiversity Hub, Australian Institute of Marine Science.
2. Fourqurean, J. et al. (2012) Seagrass ecosystems as globally significant carbon stock. Nature Geosci. 5, 505-509.



Scalloped hammerhead shark
(*Sphyrna lewini*)

FEEDING OTHER SPECIES

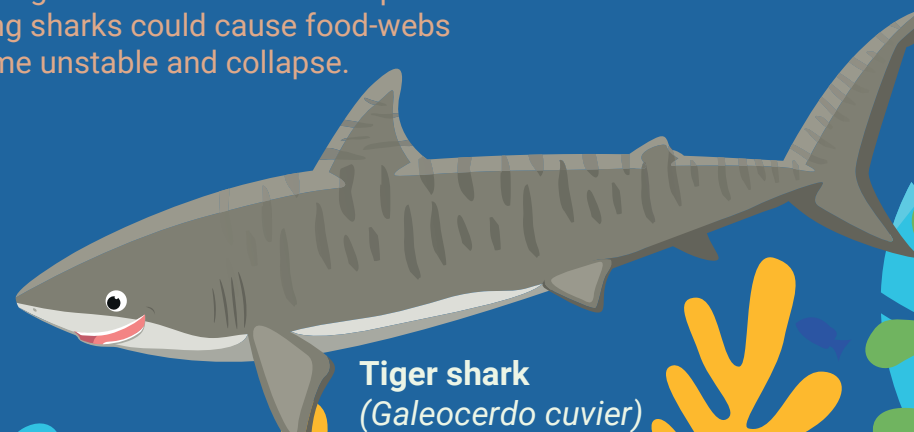
Sharks can be messy eaters. Other fish species often swoop in to scavenge the scraps for a much-needed meal.



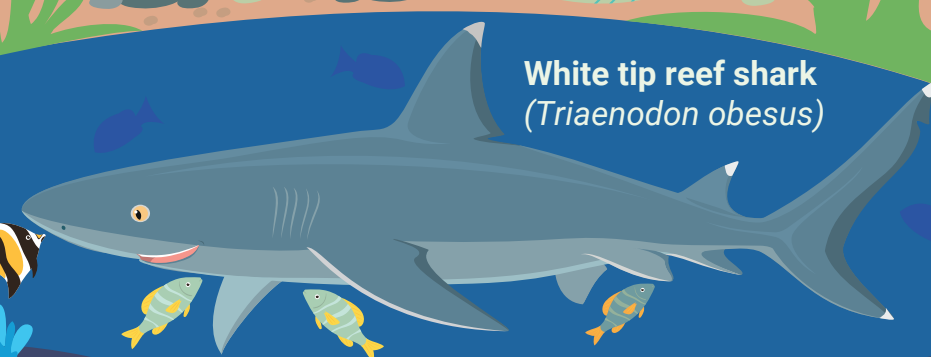
Australian blacktip reef shark
(*Carcharhinus tilstoni*)

BALANCING POPULATIONS

Sharks are generally at the top of the food chain. They help keep marine food-webs in check by maintaining the natural balance of species. Removing sharks could cause food-webs to become unstable and collapse.



Tiger shark
(*Galeocerdo cuvier*)



White tip reef shark
(*Triaenodon obesus*)

NURSERIES

Reefs and nearby seagrass meadows are used as breeding grounds and nurseries for some sharks. These habitats provide a plentiful source of food and protection from the open ocean for sharks in the early stages of their life.

CLEANING STATION

Parasites that live inside a sharks mouth or on its skin can cause irritations or harmful diseases. When sharks pop into a cleaning station, fish such as the cleaner wrasse help keep sharks healthy by eating its parasites.

Zebra shark
(*Stegostoma fasciatum*)

SHELTER

Reefs are complex habitats of different shapes and sizes, providing shelter for sharks and a range of other small fish and invertebrates.

BECOME A
SHARK
CHAMPION
TODAY!

sharkchampions.org.au