

= Oceanic whitetip shark =

The Oceanic whitetip shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*), also known as Brown Milbert 's sand bar shark , Brown shark , Nigano shark , Oceanic white @-@ tipped whaler , and Silvertip shark , is a large pelagic requiem shark inhabiting tropical and warm temperate seas . Its stocky body is most notable for its long , white @-@ tipped , rounded fins .

This aggressive but slow @-@ moving fish dominates feeding frenzies , and is a danger to shipwreck or air crash survivors . Recent studies show steeply declining populations because its large fins are highly valued as the chief ingredient of shark fin soup and , as with other shark species , the whitetip faces mounting fishing pressure throughout its range .

= = Taxonomy = =

The oceanic whitetip shark , or lesser white shark was described in 1831 by naturalist René @-@ Primevère Lesson , who named the shark *Carcharhinus maou* . It was next described by Cuban Felipe Poey in 1861 as *Squalus longimanus* . The name *Pterolamiops longimanus* has also been used . The species epithet *longimanus* refers to the size of its pectoral fins (*longimanus* translates from Latin as " long hands ") . The oceanic whitetip shark has many common names in English : Brown Milbert 's sand bar shark , brown shark , nigano shark , whitetip whaler , and whitetip shark .

The rules of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature are that in general the first @-@ published description has priority ; therefore the valid scientific name for the oceanic whitetip shark should be *Carcharhinus maou* . However , Lesson 's name remained forgotten for so long that *Carcharhinus longimanus* remains widely accepted .

= = Distribution and habitat = =

The oceanic whitetip is found globally in deep , open water , with a temperature greater than 18 ° C (64 ° F) . It prefers waters between 20 ° C (68 ° F) and 28 ° C (82 ° F) and tends to withdraw from areas when temperatures fall outside of this . They were once extremely common and widely distributed , and still inhabit a wide band around the globe ; however , recent studies suggest that their numbers have drastically declined . An analysis of the US pelagic longline logbook data between 1992 ? 2000 (covering the Northwest and Western Central Atlantic) estimated a decline of 70 % over that period .

They are found worldwide between 45 ° north and 43 ° south latitude . In 2004 , an oceanic whitetip was discovered dead on the west coast of Sweden ? far beyond what was once considered the northern boundary of its range .

The shark spends most of its time in the upper layer of the ocean ? to a depth of 150 metres (490 ft) ? and prefers off @-@ shore , deep @-@ ocean areas . According to longline capture data , increasing distance from land correlates to a greater population of sharks . Occasionally it is found close to land , in waters as shallow as 37 metres (120 ft) , mainly around mid @-@ ocean islands such as Hawaii , or in areas where the continental shelf is narrow and there is access to nearby deep water . It is typically solitary , though gatherings have been observed where food is plentiful . Unlike many animals , it does not have a diurnal cycle , and is active both day and night . Its swimming style is slow , with widely spread pectoral fins . Despite their habitual isolation from members of their own species , pilot fish , dolphinfish , and remora may accompany them . In 1988 , Jeremy Stafford @-@ Deitsch reported seeing an individual accompanied by a shortfin pilot whale .

= = Description = =

C. longimanus ' most distinguishing characteristics are its long , wing @-@ like pectoral and dorsal fins . The fins are significantly larger than most other shark species , and are conspicuously rounded . The shark 's nose is rounded and its eyes are circular , with nictitating membranes .

C. longimanus has a ' typical ' , although somewhat flattened requiem shark body , often with a

mildly humpbacked aspect . It is bronze , brown , bluish or grey dorsally (the colour varies by region) , and white ventrally (although it may occasionally have a yellow tint) . The oceanic whitetip shark is a medium @-@ sized requiem shark . The largest specimen ever caught measured 4 m (13 ft) , an exceptionally large size considering few specimens are known to exceed a length of 3 m (9 @.@ 8 ft) . The maximum reported weight is 170 kg (370 lb) . The female is typically larger than the male by 10 cm (3 @.@ 9 in) . Males attain sexual maturity at 1 @.@ 7 to 1 @.@ 9 m (5 @.@ 6 to 6 @.@ 2 ft) and females about 1 @.@ 8 to 2 m (5 @.@ 9 to 6 @.@ 6 ft) . In the Gulf of Mexico in the 1950s , the mean weight of oceanic whitetip sharks was 86 @.@ 4 kg (190 lb) . In the 1990s , the sharks of the species from the same area averaged only 56 @.@ 1 kg (124 lb) .

Most of its fins (dorsal , pectoral , pelvic , and caudal) have white tips (juvenile specimens and some adults may lack these) . Along with white tips , the fins may be mottled , and in young specimens can have black marks . A saddle @-@ like marking may be apparent between first and second dorsal fins . The shark has several kinds of teeth . Those in the mandible (lower jaw) have a thin serrated tip and are relatively small and triangular (somewhat fang @-@ like) . There are between 13 and 15 teeth on either side of the symphysis . The teeth in the upper jaw are triangular , but much larger and broader with entirely serrated edges ? there are 14 or 15 along each side of the symphysis . The denticles lie flat and typically have between five and seven ridges .

= = Diet = =

C. longimanus feeds mainly on pelagic cephalopods and bony fish . However , its diet can be far more varied and less selective ? it is known to eat threadfins , stingrays , sea turtles , birds , gastropods , crustaceans , and mammalian carrion . The bony fish it feeds on include lancetfish , oarfish , barracuda , jacks , dolphinfish , marlin , tuna , and mackerel . Its feeding methods include biting into groups of fish and swimming through schools of tuna with an open mouth . When feeding with other species , it becomes aggressive . Peter Benchley , author of Jaws , observed this shark swimming among pilot whales and eating their faeces .

= = Behaviour = =

The oceanic whitetip is usually solitary and slow @-@ moving , and tends to cruise near the top of the water column , covering vast stretches of empty water scanning for possible food sources . Until the 16th century , sharks were known to mariners as " sea dogs " and the oceanic whitetip , the most common ship @-@ following shark , exhibits dog @-@ like behaviour when its interest is piqued : when attracted to something that appears to be food , its movements become more avid and it will approach cautiously but stubbornly , retreating and maintaining a safe distance if driven off , but ready to rush in if the opportunity presents itself . Oceanic whitetips are not fast swimmers , but they are capable of surprising bursts of speed . Whitetips commonly compete for food with silky sharks , making up for its comparatively leisurely swimming style with aggressive displays .

Groups often form when individuals converge on a food source , whereupon a feeding frenzy may occur . This seems to be triggered not by blood in the water or by bloodlust , but by the species ' highly strung and goal @-@ directed nature (conserving energy between infrequent feeding opportunities when it is not slowly plying the open ocean) . The oceanic whitetip is a competitive , opportunistic predator that exploits the resource at hand , rather than avoiding trouble in favour of a possibly easier future meal .

There does not seem to be segregation by sex and size . Whitetips follow schools of tuna or squid , and trail groups of cetaceans such as dolphins and pilot whales , scavenging their prey . Their instinct is to follow baitfish migrations that accompany ocean @-@ going ships . When whaling took place in warm waters , oceanic whitetips were often responsible for much of the damage to floating carcasses .

= = Reproduction = =

Mating season is in early summer in the northwest Atlantic Ocean and southwest Indian Ocean , although females captured in the Pacific have been found with embryos year round , suggesting a longer mating season there . The shark is viviparous ? embryos develop in utero and are fed by a placental sac . Its gestation period is one year . Litter sizes vary from one to 15 with the young born at a length of about 0 .6 metres (24 in) . Sexual maturity is reached at close to 1 .75 metres (69 in) for males and 2 metres (80 in) for females .

= = Relationship with humans = =

The oceanic whitetip is a commercially important species for its fins , meat , and oil . It is eaten fresh , smoked , dried , and salted and its hide is used for leather . It is subject to fishing pressure throughout virtually its whole range ? although it is more often taken as by @-@ catch than by design , since it is drawn to longline bait that is intended for other species .

Famed oceanographic researcher Jacques Cousteau described the oceanic whitetip as " the most dangerous of all sharks " . Despite the greater notoriety of the great white shark and other sharks habitually found nearer the shore , the oceanic whitetip is suspected to be responsible for many fatal shark bites on humans , as a result of predation on survivors of shipwrecks or downed aircraft . Such incidents are not included in common shark @-@ bite indices for the 20th and 21st centuries , and as a result of this , the oceanic whitetip does not have the highest number of recorded incidents ; only 5 recorded bites as of 2009 . In one incident , the torpedoing of USS Indianapolis on 30 July 1945 , oceanic whitetips are believed to be responsible for many of the fatal bites of sailors who survived the initial sinking , though most reportedly died from exposure to the elements rather than from shark bites .

Also during World War II , the Nova Scotia , a steamship carrying approximately 1 ,000 people near South Africa , was sunk by a German submarine . With only 192 survivors , many deaths were attributed to the whitetip .

One particularly infamous oceanic whitetip was implicated in several bites on tourists in the Red Sea near Sharm El Sheikh , Egypt in 2010 , and was featured in a Shark Week episode called " Rogue Sharks " . This oceanic whitetip was recognized individually by the bite mark taken out of its upper tail lobe . Accumulating evidence revealed this shark to have been conditioned to being hand fed . Upon associating the divers with an easy supply of food , it bit the divers and snorkelers where it had seen the fish being kept ; fanny packs the divers carried . This caused the shark to target the divers ' buttock and thigh regions in the hope of obtaining a meal . These 2010 Sharm El Sheikh bites resulted in one death and four injuries to humans . The bites were further worsened by the overfishing in that area of the Red Sea , effectively forcing the shark closer to shore where the bites took place .

Dr. Christopher Neff , a policy analyst at the University of Sydney , argues that terms like " attack " are laden with cultural stigmatization . Instead of the word " attack , " he proposes labeling human @-@ shark interactions , on a scale of extremity , either :

- encounters
- minor bites
- moderate bites
- fatal bites

The term " attack " is only appropriate in specific instances where specialists can confirm the predatory nature of the shark @-@ human encounter , which is extremely difficult to do . While many encounters with Oceanic White Tip Sharks appear predatory in nature , without the verification of a scientific community in each instance , it is best to assume the accidental or non @-@ predatory intent of the encounters .

= = Captivity = =

The oceanic whitetip has fared better in captivity than other large sharks of the open ocean , such as the mako and blue shark . Among five recorded captive oceanic whitetips , the three with time

records all lived for more than a year in captivity . One of these , a female in Monterey Bay Aquarium 's Outer Bay exhibit , lived for more than three years during which it grew 0 @. @ 3 m (1 ft) . The two remaining lack a time record , but grew about 0 @. @ 5 m (1 @. @ 6 ft) during their time in captivity . The Monterey Bay oceanic whitetip was featured briefly in the Shark Week special " Sharks Under Glass " .

= = Conservation status = =

In 1969 , Lineaweaver and Backus wrote of the oceanic whitetip : " [it is] extraordinarily abundant , perhaps the most abundant large animal , large being over 100 pounds [45 kg] , on the face of the earth " . There was little further population study until 2003 when the numbers were estimated to have dropped by as much as 70 % in the Northwest and Western Central Atlantic between 1992 and 2000 . Another study focusing on the Gulf of Mexico , using a mix of data from US pelagic longline surveys from the mid @-@ 1950s and observations from the late @-@ 1990s , estimated a decline in numbers in this location of 99 @. @ 3 % over this period . However , changes in fishing practices and data collection methods complicate estimates .

As a result of these findings its status on the IUCN Red List was moved to " Vulnerable " globally (from " Lower Risk / Near Threatened ") and " Critically Endangered " in the Northwest and Western Central Atlantic areas .

Under the 1995 UN Agreement on the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UNFSA) , coastal and fishing states are specifically required to adopt measures to conserve listed species , but little progress is visible on the oceanic whitetip .

From 3 January 2013 the shark was fully protected in New Zealand territorial waters under the Wildlife Act 1953 .

In March 2013 , three endangered commercially valuable sharks , the hammerheads , the oceanic whitetip and porbeagle were added to Appendix 2 of CITES , bringing shark fishing and commerce of these species under licensing and regulation .