

LEVELED BOOK • 1

Whale Sharks: Giant Fish



Written by Curtis Thomas

www.readinga-z.com

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Focus Question

What makes the whale shark an unusual animal?

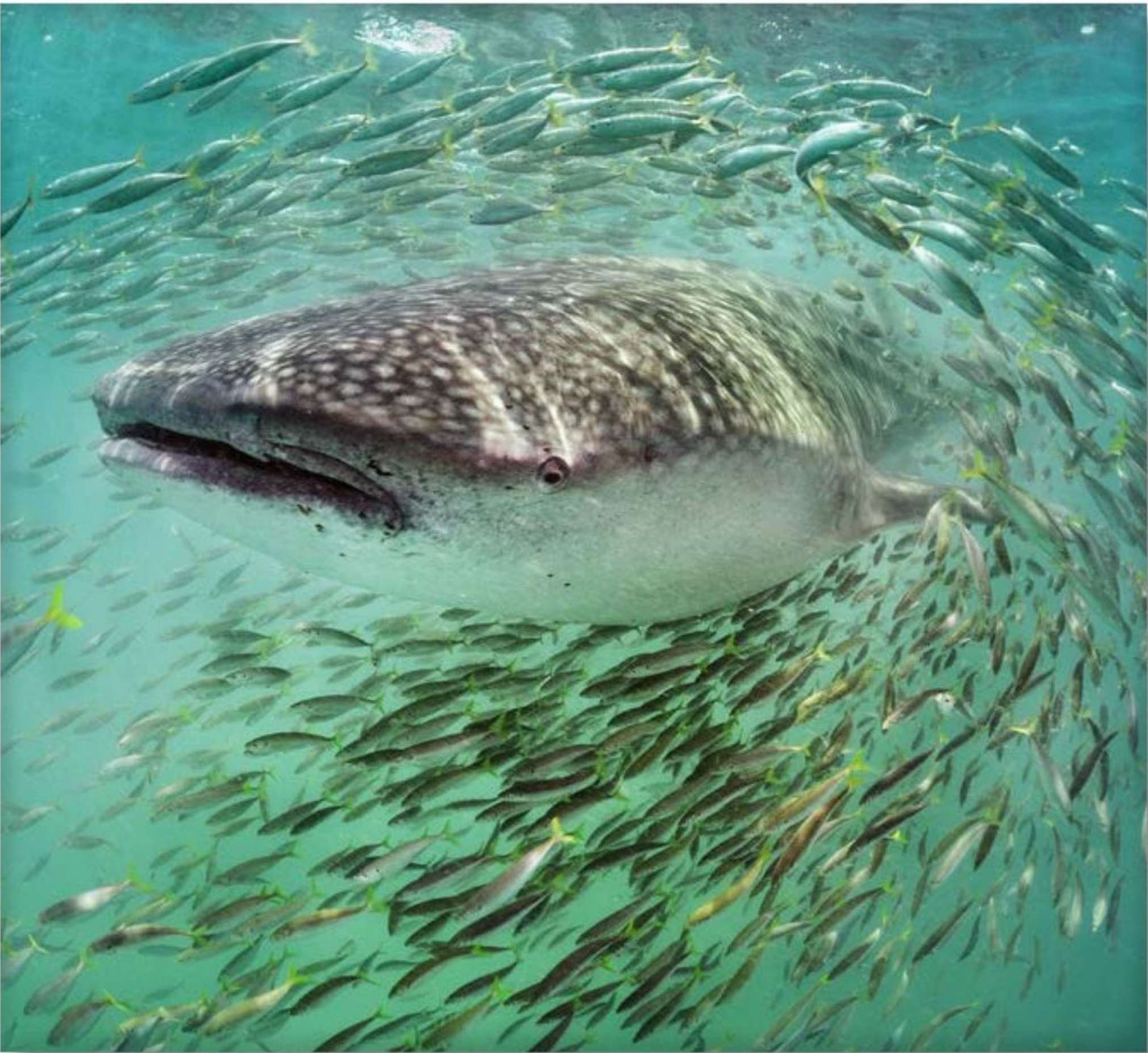


Table of Contents

A Very Big Fish 4

Big Mouth 6

A Warm Bath 9

Mealtime! 11

Giant Babies 13

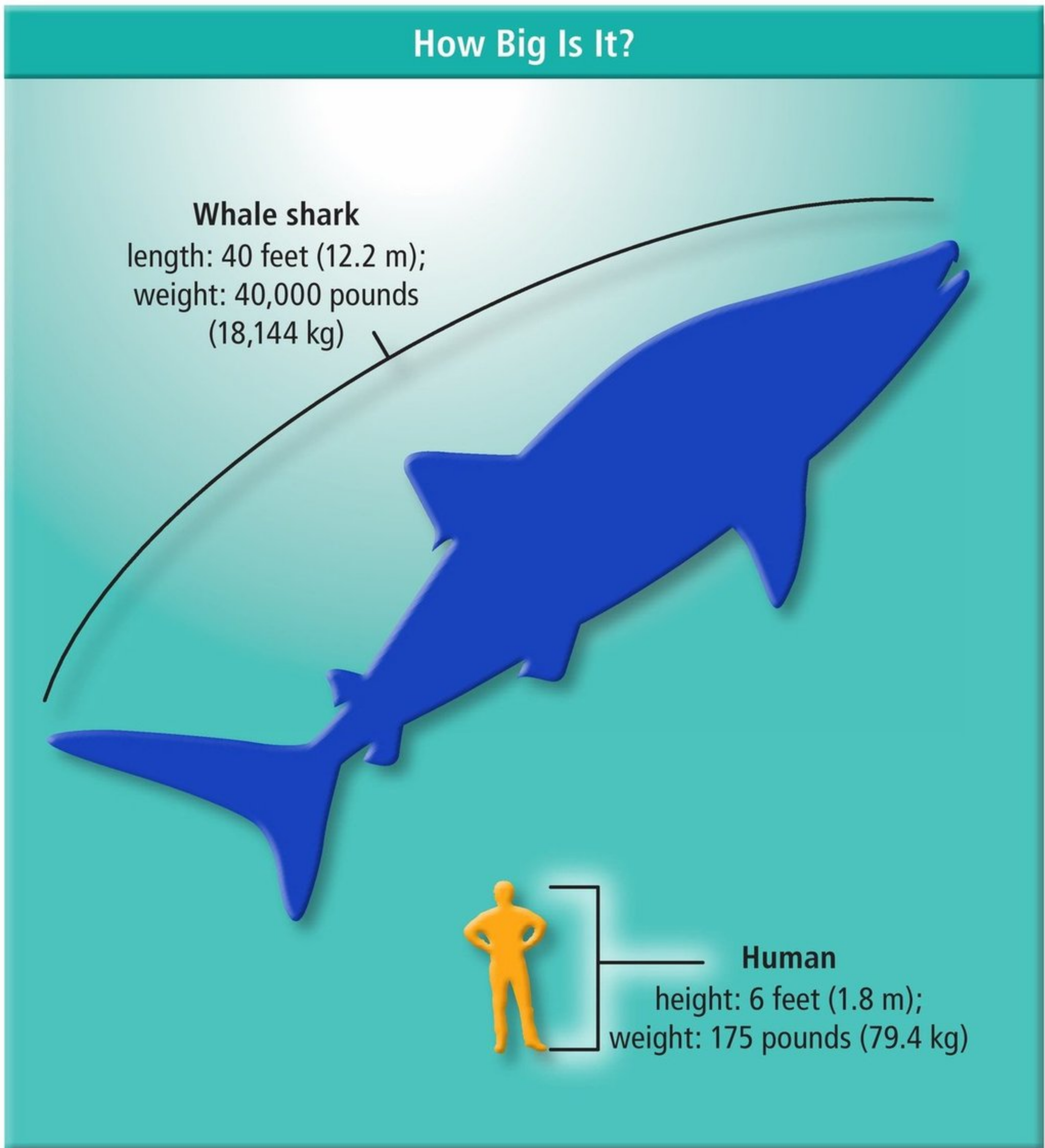
Jumbo Fish 15

Glossary 16

A Very Big Fish

The whale shark is the
biggest fish in the world.

An adult whale shark
is as long as a school bus!





People should not touch or bother whale sharks when swimming with them.

Whale sharks are **gentle** fish.
They are not a danger to people.
People safely swim and dive
with whale sharks.

Big Mouth

A whale shark has a wide, flat head.
It has a huge mouth in the front.



A whale shark often swims with its mouth open.



Each whale shark has a different pattern of spots and stripes.

A whale shark's back is dark with light spots and stripes.

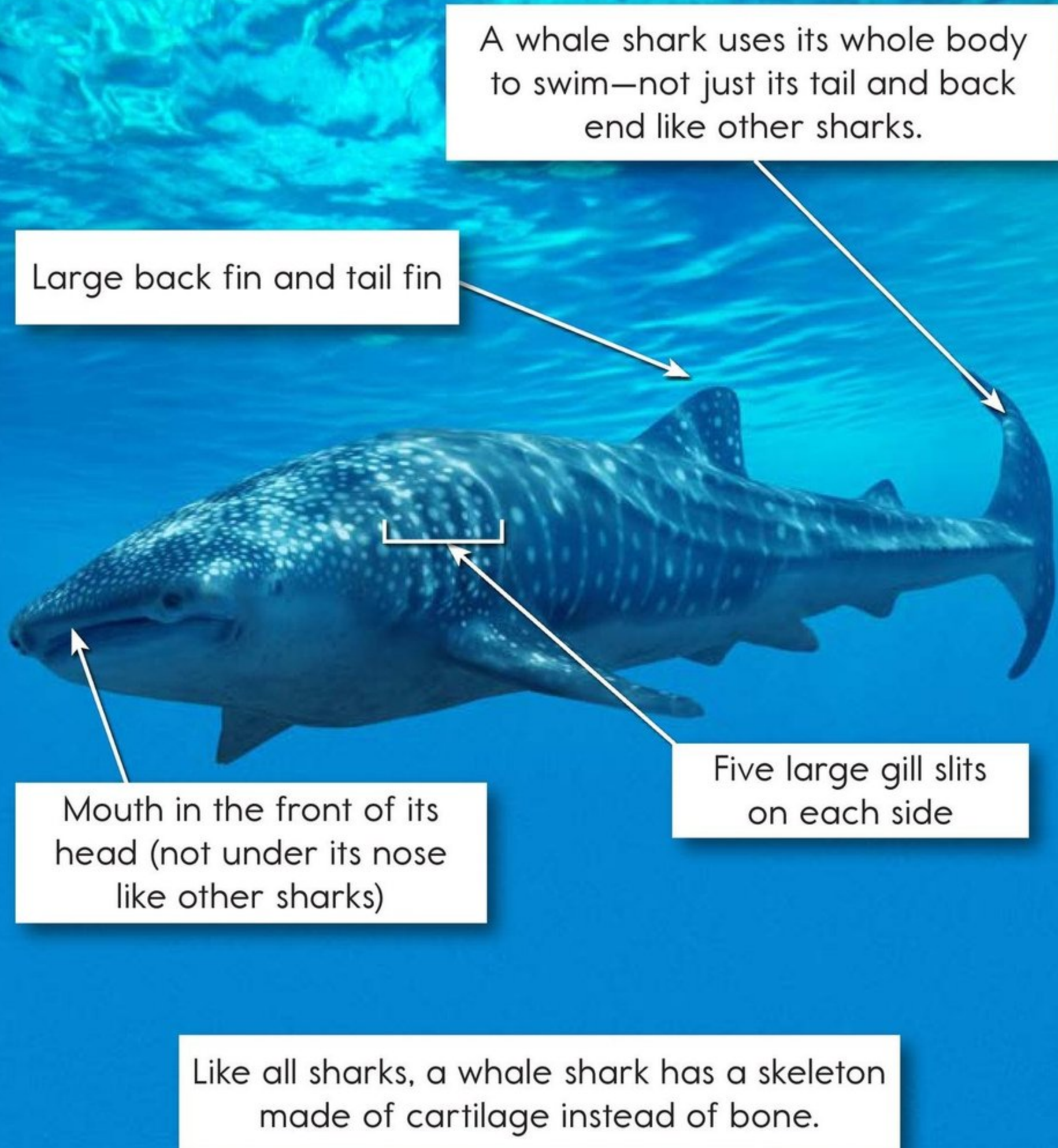
Its belly is white.

A whale shark has thick skin and sharp **scales**.



Whale sharks move slowly, traveling only 3 miles per hour (5 kmph).

What Makes a Whale Shark a Fish?



Most fish

- have a backbone
- breathe with gills
- live in water
- have tails and paired fins
- are cold-blooded
- have scales
- lay eggs



Other fish sometimes keep whale sharks company in the ocean.

A Warm Bath

Whale sharks live in warm **oceans** around the world.

They swim in the middle of the ocean and also close to **shore**.

These giant animals often swim at the **surface** of the water.

They also dive very deep.

Where Whale Sharks Live



Some whale sharks make very long trips.

No one knows for sure why.

Whale sharks sometimes gather in large groups.



A rare group of whale sharks gather together in the ocean.



Food flows into a whale shark's open mouth.

Mealtime!

Whale sharks eat tiny ocean animals and plants.

Whale sharks also eat small fish, **squid**, and fish eggs.

Once in a while, they eat bigger fish.

Whale sharks do not chew
their food.

When they open their mouth,
their food flows in with the water.

Pads near their throat
catch the food.

Then the water flows out.



Whale sharks suck in water to collect large amounts of food.



Two swimmers float near a young whale shark in the Sea of Cortez.

Giant Babies

Whale sharks give birth to live babies.

Baby whale sharks are called *pups*. The pups look like little adult whale sharks.

Whale sharks grow slowly
and live for a long time.
They may live to be
one hundred years old.

Babies and Adults



An adult whale shark
may be twenty-five times
as long as a newborn.



Whale sharks are gentle and safe to swim with.

Jumbo Fish

Whale sharks are special fish.
They are huge yet very gentle.
Whale sharks are the
biggest fish on Earth.

Glossary

- gentle** (*adj.*) kind; not harsh or aggressive (p. 5)
- oceans** (*n.*) the bodies of salt water that cover most of Earth (p. 9)
- scales** (*n.*) thin, flat plates that cover many fish and reptiles (p. 7)
- shore** (*n.*) the land along the edge of an ocean, sea, lake, or river (p. 9)
- squid** (*n.*) sea animals with long bodies, eight arms, and two tentacles (p. 11)
- surface** (*n.*) the part of the ocean or land that touches the air above it (p. 9)

Words to Know

gentle

oceans

scales

shore

squid

surface

Front and back cover: A lucky snorkeler comes face-to-face with a gentle whale shark in the Philippines.

Title page: Whale sharks often feed near the ocean’s surface.

Page 3: Baitfish form a tight school around a whale shark to stay safe from enemies.

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