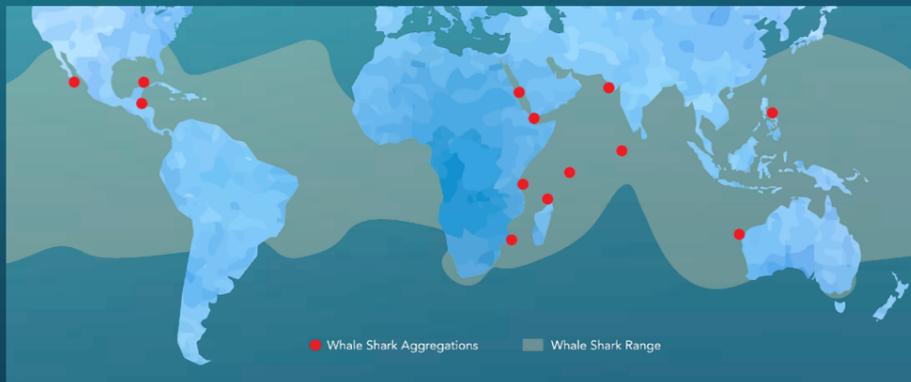


WHALE SHARKS

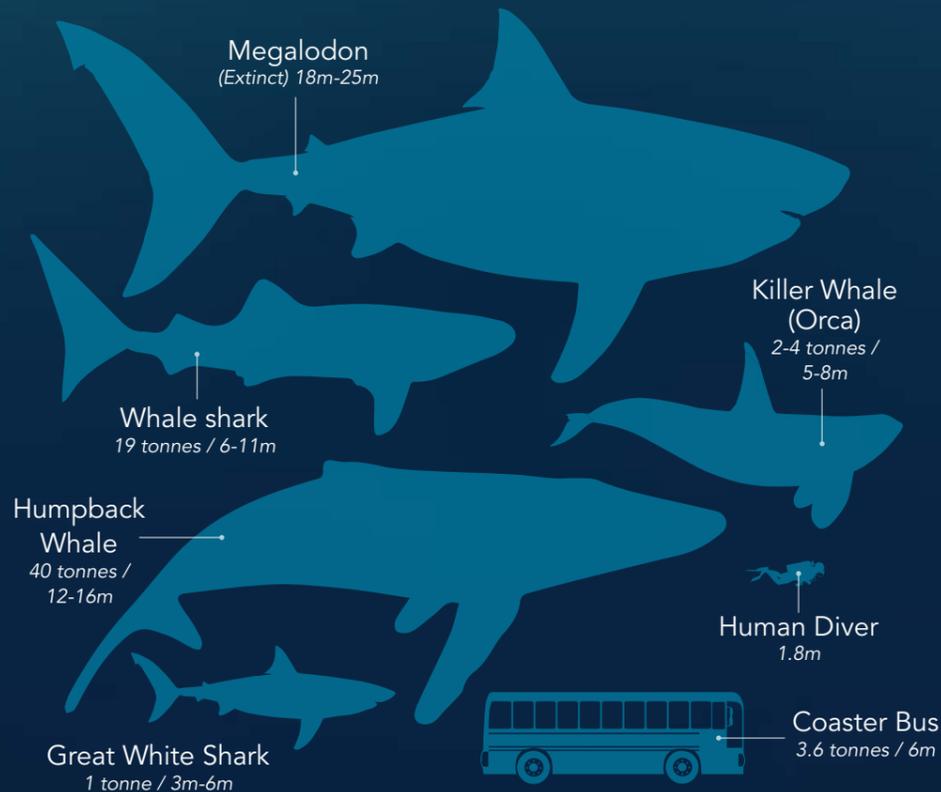
WORLD'S BIGGEST SHARK

From March/April to July/August each year it is estimated that 300-500 whale sharks aggregate on Ningaloo Reef, with sporadic sightings throughout the year. Ningaloo Reef currently holds the world's highest interaction rate of whale shark numbers and accessibility.

WHALE SHARK AGGREGATION SITES



SIZE COMPARISON



WHALE SHARK INFORMATION

They are the 6th largest animal on this planet

A whale shark has been recorded diving down past 1800m. That's more than 5 times the height of the Eiffel Tower

They have the thickest skin of any fish in the world and can be up to 10cm thick in places

Whale sharks have a lifespan that's estimated to be 70 to 100 years

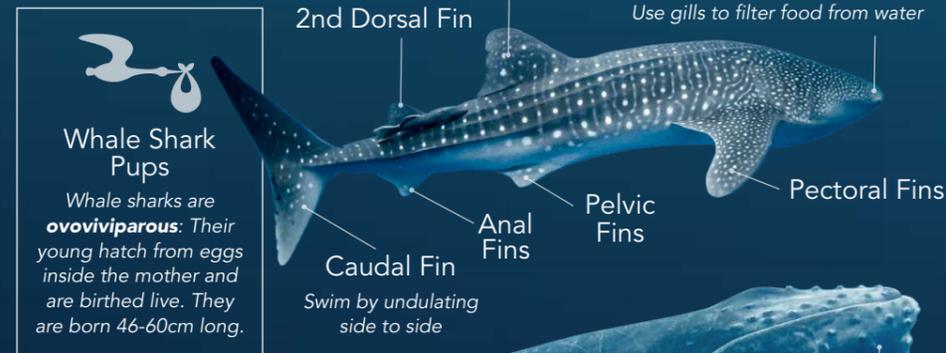
The whale shark can filter more than 5,000 litres of ocean water per hour!



ARE THEY SHARKS OR WHALES?

The whale shark is a slow-moving carpet shark and the largest known extant fish species. The 'whale' component of their name refers to their size and the fact that, like baleen whales, they are filter-feeders.

WHALE SHARK



HUMPBACK WHALE



CAN A WHALE SHARK ACCIDENTALLY SWALLOW YOU?

No! Although its mouth can be over 1 metre wide, its throat isn't big enough to pass large objects. Whale sharks have about 3,000 tiny teeth (less than 6mm long) arranged in over 300 rows and are too small to cause any damage.



WHAT DO WHALE SHARKS EAT?

Whale sharks have very large mouths and are filter-feeders, which is a feeding mode that occurs in only two other sharks, the megamouth shark and the basking shark. They feed almost exclusively on plankton and small fish, and pose no threat to humans. On average a whale shark could ingest between 1400 to 2800 g of plankton per hour. While whale sharks are mostly solitary animals they are known to feed in large groups.



PLANKTON



KRILL



SQUID



SMALL FISH

MAJOR THREATS TO THE WHALE SHARK



FISHERIES BYCATCH



VESSEL STRIKE



TARGETED FISHING

In 2016, the world's biggest fish had its conservation status updated from vulnerable to endangered on the IUCN Red List.

Whale sharks spend a significant amount of time close to the surface of the water, so although they have tough skin, they are still vulnerable to boat strike.

Sold as Tofu Fish, the whale shark is a highly valued meat in Asian markets. Fins are removed and used for use in Fin Soup or prized as displays.

WHALE SHARK SPEEDS

HIGHEST SPEED – 5KM/HR

They swim by moving their body from side to side, unlike other sharks, who just use their tails to swim.



5km/hr

NINGALOO WHALE SHARK FACTS

Ningaloo has two male whale sharks, Zorro and Stumpy, who have been returning to Ningaloo waters every year since 1995 and are 10m and 8m metres long.



Incredibly, whale sharks can grow up to 18 metres in length with a mouth over a metre wide. At Ningaloo, we usually interact with whale sharks that are 6 to 11 metres long. In locations such as Mexico, the whale sharks are juvenile and often 2 to 6 metres long.