

TIGER SHARK

GROUP 4: FISH

ORDER

Carcharhiniformes

FAMILY

Carcharhinidae

GENUS & SPECIES

Galeocerdo cuvier

The tiger shark is a deadly predator. It is a solitary hunter that will eat anything it can get down its throat—including other sharks.

KEY FACTS



SIZES

Length: 10-16 ft. average, but probably up to 23 ft.
Weight: 2,200 lb. average.



BREEDING

Breeding system: Tiger sharks are ovoviviparous, which means that they produce eggs that hatch within the female's body.
Gestation: About 9 months.
No. of young: 10-80.



LIFESTYLE

Habit: Solitary, nomadic.
Diet: Anything it can catch.
Lifespan: Not known, but probably 30-40 years.



RELATED SPECIES

The tiger is one of the requiem sharks, a large family which includes the lemon shark, blue shark, and bull shark.



Range of the tiger shark.

DISTRIBUTION

Mainly tropical, coastal waters throughout the world in winter, spreading north and south in summer.

CONSERVATION

The tiger shark has less commercial value than many other sharks, so although it is prized by sport fishermen, it is under no direct threat.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE TIGER SHARK

Head: Wedge-shaped head gives minimum side resistance, allowing the shark to turn quickly.



Swimming: Normally swims using sinuous movements of its body. Its high back and dorsal fin act as a fulcrum, allowing it to spin quickly on its axis.

Electro-receptors: Small pits containing electrical sensors enable the shark to pick up even the faintest muscle movement of its prey so it can locate its victim in the dark.

Pectorals: Long fins that act like wings provide lift as the fish swims through the water.

Liver: The large oily liver helps to keep the shark from sinking.

Tail: Long upper tail lobe provides thrust for sudden bursts of speed.



The tiger shark gets its name because of the dark stripes across its back. It is an efficient killer, armed with an extraordinary sense of smell and serrated teeth that can slice through flesh and bone.

A proven man-eater, it is one of the most feared sharks in the world.

HABITS

The large, powerful, solitary tiger shark cruises the coastal and offshore waters of tropical seas. It will travel up to fifty miles a day, rarely stopping except to eat.

In summer, the tiger shark may follow warm water currents as far south as New Zealand, or north to Japan or the northern United States. In winter it stays closer to the equator near the coral reefs of the Caribbean and the Pacific and Indian Oceans where it is

the largest and most dominant of all the reef predators, eating anything it can find.

The tiger shark tends to stay in the deep waters on the fringe of reefs, occasionally penetrating the channels to attack in the shallows. It glides day and night over the reef and ocean bed.

Above: The dark stripes that give the tiger shark its name are clearly visible on this young animal but will eventually fade as it grows older.

FOOD & HUNTING

The tiger shark is an indiscriminate feeder; it will eat anything. In addition to its main diet of fish, squid, sea turtles, seals, and smaller sharks, items such as car license plates and gasoline cans have been found in its stomach.

A tiger shark has a large mouth and massive, powerful jaws lined with flat, triangular,

DID YOU KNOW?

- Sharks were once thought to be instinctive killing machines, but it is now believed that they learn to hunt by experience.
- The sense of smell is so important to a shark that nearly two-thirds of its brain is devoted to processing scent information.

TIGER SHARK & MAN

The tiger shark has been responsible for more fatal attacks on man than any other species of shark. Because it will eat anything, including man, it is one of the most feared sharks in tropical waters.

Most killer sharks are not man-eaters; they may attack or kill people, but they won't actually eat the remains. But accounts of tiger sharks swallowing their human victims abound. In one report, a tiger shark attacked two men and a woman on a life raft, killed and swallowed one of the men, then came back and snatched the woman. Their

companion reached the safety of a nearby reef and escaped unharmed.

Still, despite such tales, some shark experts and divers insist that tiger sharks are really quite gentle. But the

common perception for most people is that the tiger shark means trouble.

Below: This trusting shark expert proves that the tiger's fearsome reputation can be taken too seriously.



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notched teeth with serrated edges. As teeth are broken or lost, new teeth grow in to replace them.

The tiger shark has good eyesight, but it relies mostly on other senses to track and catch its prey. It has an acute sense of smell, which enables it to pick up even the faintest traces of blood in the water and follow them to their source. It is also sensitive to low-frequency pressure waves produced by movements in

the water. Even tiny nerve and muscle twinges reach its sensitive electroreceptors, so the shark can pinpoint prey in the darkest, murkiest water.

Once the tiger shark has located its prey, it may circle it for a while or nudge it with its snout before making the kill. The final attack is frenzied; the shark will devour anything in its path.

Below: The powerful jaws and teeth are pushed out as the tiger shark closes in on its prey.



BREEDING

Most fish produce large numbers of eggs that are fertilized by sperm ejected into the water. Sharks, however, breed by internal fertilization, in much the same way as mammals do.

During mating, one of the male's pelvic fins is introduced into the female's genital opening to act as a guide for the sperm. Mating can be painful for the female, since the male will often use his teeth to hold her still.

The young (between 10 and 80 in each brood) are nourished inside their mother's body for approximately nine months. When they are born, they are completely independent and equipped with a full set of teeth. They are able to swim away as soon as they emerge and begin to hunt for themselves immediately.