



SHARK STEWARDS

RESTORING OCEAN HEALTH BY SAVING SHARKS

OCEANIC WHITETIP

(*Carcharhinus longimanus*)

Order – Carcharhiniformes
Family – Carcharhinidae
Genus – Carcharhinus
Species – Longimanus

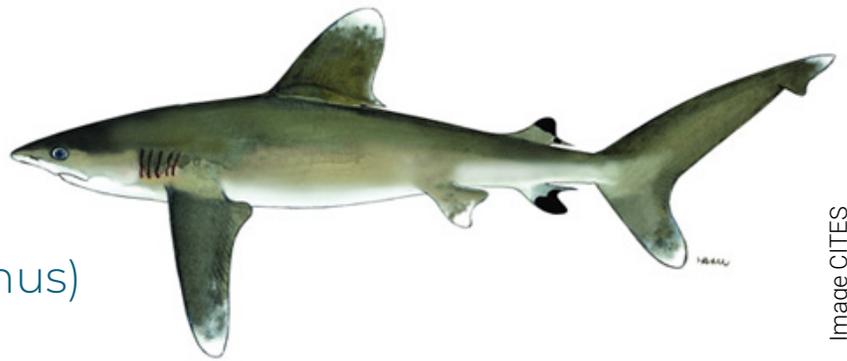


Image CITES

Named for their white-tipped fins, this sharks is solitary, very curious, and slow moving, preferring the upper layers of deep-water areas where it is an opportunistic hunter.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND HABITAT

These sharks are found globally in tropical and subtropical waters between the latitudes of 30°N and 35°S. They are typically observed far offshore, but have been reported in shallower water near land, usually oceanic islands.

Oceanic whitetips are typically found at the surface of deep waters (0-656 feet (0-200 m)) with temperatures between 64 to 82°F (18-28°C). These solitary predators will aggregate around food, and have been observed in “feeding frenzies” when a food source is present.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

1. First dorsal fin is broadly rounded and wide.
2. Pectoral fins are and paddle-shaped.
3. Fins usually have white colorations on and near the tips.

BIOLOGY

→ Distinctive Features

The oceanic whitetip shark is easily identified. It has a large rounded first dorsal fin and very long and wide paddle-like pectoral fins. The head of this shark includes a short and bluntly rounded nose and circular eyes. The most distinctive feature is the white coloration on the fins.

→ Coloration

Named for the white molting color on their first dorsal, pectoral, pelvic, and caudal fins. Young sharks may have black colorations as well. The body of the oceanic whitetip shark is grayish bronze to brown in color dorsally (top), varying in different populations. The ventral surface (underside) is white.

→ Size and Age

Oceanic whitetip sharks grow to large sizes, with some individuals reaching 11-13 feet (3.5-4 m). However, most are less than 10 feet (3 m) in length. Males and females mature at similar sizes of about 5.6-6.2 feet (1.7-1.9 m) in length, both corresponding to an age of 4 to 5 years.

FUN FACT

Oceanic whitetip sharks have been reported to swim with the shortfin pilot whale in Hawaiian waters.

→ Food Habits

Prey includes bony fish, stingrays, turtles, squids, crustaceans, and carrion (dead whales and dolphins). If other species of sharks encounter oceanic whitetips, the oceanic whitetip is usually the dominant animal.

→ Reproduction

C. longimanus are viviparous with the eggs hatching inside the body being nourished by a yolk sac. The breeding season happens in the early summer, with pups being born in groups of 1-15 after a 10-12 month gestation period.

→ Predators

Larger sharks are potentially predators to the oceanic whitetip, specifically for pups and sub-adults.

FUN FACT

Oceanic whitetip sharks are very curious, often seen investigating boats, divers, fishing gear, and even garbage.

DANGER TO HUMANS

Although primarily found offshore, the oceanic whitetip is considered potentially dangerous to humans. Due to this shark's opportunistic feeding behavior, size and unpredictability around divers, this species should be treated with extreme caution.

CONSERVATION

Once found in high abundance worldwide, this shark has suffered huge declines of over 90%. Bycatch in the tuna industry has vastly impacted this species. Highly coveted in the shark fin trade, Oceanic Whitetips face extinction. Protected in 2013 under CITES Appendix II, this shark is listed by the IUCN as Critically Endangered in the northwest and central Atlantic Ocean. Shark Stewards is working on Zero catch in the Pacific Tuna Fishery.