



SHARK STEWARDS

RESTORING OCEAN HEALTH BY SAVING SHARKS

BLUE SHARK (*Prionace glauca*)

Order – Carcharhiniformes
Family – Carcharhinidae
Genus – *Prionace*
Species – *Glauca*

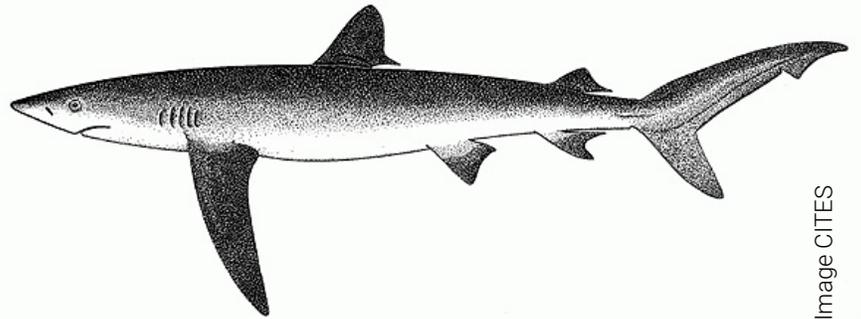


Image CITES

Named for their deep blue coloration, these open water sharks are known for being curious. They hunt in the open ocean, and sometimes hunt in groups.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND HABITAT

These sharks are found globally in temperate and tropical oceans, ranging from latitudes of 60°N to 50°S. Blue sharks are a pelagic species, rarely found in coastal waters, however can be consistently found inshore where the continental shelf is narrow. They are found at depths up to 350 meters (1148 feet) deep. The habitat preferred by blue sharks is the open ocean, ideally with cooler water ranging from 12-20°C. In summer months and in warmer water, these sharks can be found deeper in cooler water, coming to shallower depths at night.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

1. Distinct blue coloration, fades to white on the shark's underside.
2. Elongated pectoral fins, long rounded snout.

BIOLOGY

→ Distinctive Features

The blue shark has large eyes and a long, cone-shaped snout. The pectoral fins are pointed, and are relatively much longer than other shark species. The caudal fin is narrowly lobed, with a long lobe on the upper tail.

→ Coloration

Distinct dark blue color on the dorsal (upper) side of the shark, with a well-defined white ventral (lower) underside. The sharp contrast in colors acts as a camouflage in the open ocean, known as counter-shading. While counter-shading is common with most shark species, blue sharks have a very distinctive color contrasts.

FUN FACT

Blue sharks have very triangular teeth. The upper jaw has 14 teeth on each side, and the lower jaw has 13-15 teeth on each side.

→ Size and Age

The maximum size for blue sharks is around 380 cm (around 12.5 feet). Males mature between the ages of 4-6 feet, with the average length being 6 to 7 feet. Females mature between the ages of 5-7 years, and average lengths of around 7 feet. The lifespan for blue sharks is more than 20 years.

→ Food Habits

Blue sharks' diet primarily consists of small bony fish, such as sardines, and pelagic invertebrates such as squid. While mainly feeding at night, blue sharks are known to eat at any time of the day.

→ Reproduction

Blue sharks are viviparous with the eggs hatching inside the body being nourished by a yolk sac. Gestation periods last 9 to 12 months, and results in litters averaging around 30 individuals, but can have up to 80 sharks in a litter.

→ Predators

Predators include larger sharks, such as the great White shark (*Charcharodon carcharias*) and the Shortfin mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*). Killer whales (*Orcinus orca*) feed on blue sharks as well.

FUN FACT

Blue sharks are very curious! They have been known to get close to divers and ships. Spear fishermen often report blue shark sightings as well.

DANGER TO HUMANS

According to the International Shark Attack File, there have been 13 unprovoked attacks, some resulting from air or sea accidents in the open ocean.

CONSERVATION

The blue shark is one of the most heavily fished sharks in the world, with an estimated 20 million individuals being caught each year for the shark fin trade. These sharks are frequently killed as accidental bycatch in gill nets and tuna longlines. The IUCN lists blue sharks as Near Threatened but large declines, particularly in the Atlantic, are leading to a reassessment and potentially a CITES listing.