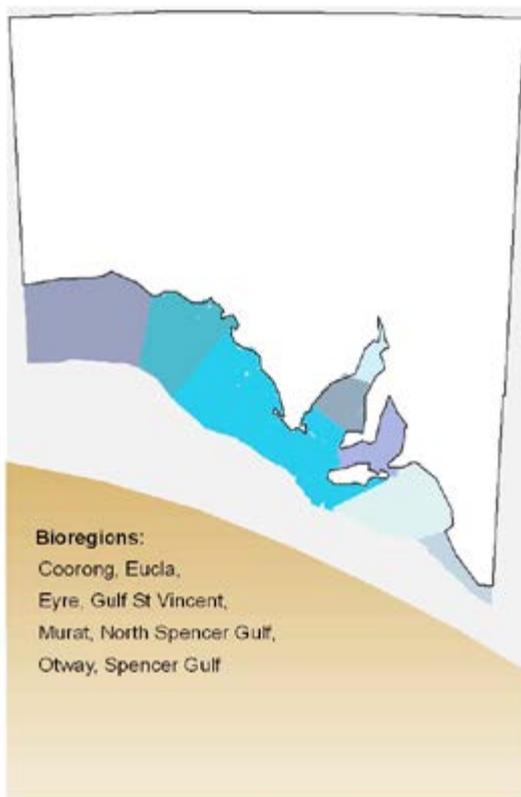
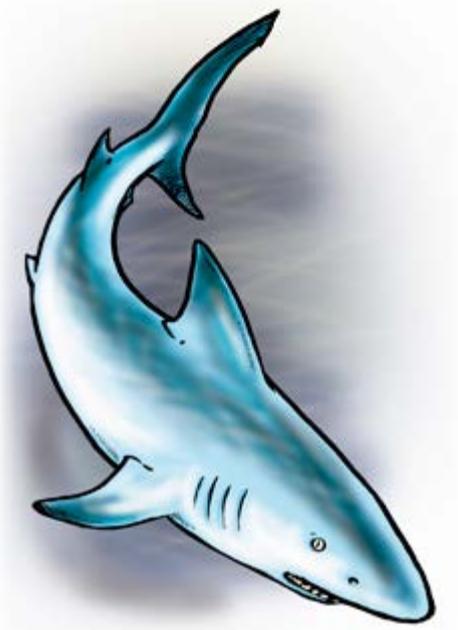


Great White Shark

Carcharodon carcharias



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.

Great White Sharks (Great Whites) are large predators at the top of the marine food chain. They are in the same class as all sharks and rays (Chondrichthyes) – this group is different from other fish as their skeleton is made from cartilage instead of bone. They have an average length of four to five metres, but can grow up to seven metres.

Using their powerful tails to propel them, these sharks can move through the water at up to 24 km per hour. Their mouths are lined with up to 300 serrated triangular teeth arranged in several rows.

Diet

Great Whites are able to use electroreception (the ability to detect weak electrical currents) to find and attack prey without seeing it. This can be useful in murky water or when their prey is hidden under sediment. This gives them the ability to navigate by sensing the Earth's magnetic field. They have a strong sense of smell which is also useful in detecting prey. Contrary to some people's beliefs, they often only attack humans to 'sample bite' and do not usually choose to eat human flesh, preferring marine mammals such as seals and sea lions. They are also known to feed on dolphins, octopus, squid, other sharks, rays and lobster, fish, crabs and seabirds.

Breeding

Great Whites have a low reproduction rate that makes it difficult for species numbers to recover. Males mature at eight to ten years and females mature at 12-18 years. Females give birth to two to ten pups once every two to three years.

Habitat

Found in temperate and sub tropical areas around the world, Great Whites can migrate across oceans. In Australia, they are found from southern Queensland, around the southern coast to the north-western cape of Western Australia.

Threats

Great Whites are caught as bycatch in fishing nets by commercial and recreational fishers. They are also illegally hunted for their fins, and killed by 'trophy hunters' for their jaws and teeth. Habitat deterioration and the loss of food sources are continuing threats. Entanglement in marine debris and eating plastic and other litter can also harm or kill these animals.

There is increasing interest in first-hand experiences with this animal underwater. This industry is being tightly managed to minimise its impact on the sharks' natural behaviour.



Great White Sharks can detect 1 drop of blood in 100 litres of water! This means they can detect small quantities of blood up to 5 km away.

Conservation

The Great White Shark is a protected species in Australian waters.

You can help the Great White Shark by:

- keeping our oceans clean – don't leave your litter behind
- signing a petition to stop shark finning
- spreading the word – educate others about Great White Sharks and why they are so special and misunderstood.



Photo by Mark Conlin

Great White Shark

For further information

Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

Eastwood: (08) 8273 9100

Gawler: (08) 8523 7700

Lobethal: (08) 8389 5900

Willunga: (08) 8550 3400

Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

Northern Adelaide: (08) 8406 8289

Barossa: (08) 8563 8436

Central Adelaide: (08) 8234 7255

Southern Adelaide: (08) 8384 0176

Southern Fleurieu: (08) 8551 0524

