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Shark Mythbusters

It's time to bust some shark myths...



SHARKS

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MYTH: Sharks are an endangered species.

FACT: Only the **smalltooth** and **largetooth sawfish**, more related to skates and rays than sharks, are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

- NOAA's role in **managing sharks** domestically and internationally
- More on **international shark conservation**
- Open the shark files: **Q&A with a NOAA shark scientist**

MYTH: Over 100 million sharks are harvested annually for their fins.

FACT: The best estimate of the number of sharks that are killed for their fins is 38 million sharks per year based on research conducted by Dr. Shelley Clarke in 2000. However, the range could be anywhere from 26 million to 73 million per year.



Underwater shortfin mako shark.



Basking shark.

MYTH: Sharks eat continuously.

FACT: Compared to many other fish, sharks have low estimates of daily ration (mean amount of food consumed on a daily basis). Sharks have a relatively short feeding session followed by longer periods of reduced predatory activity until the return of appetite.

MYTH: If you cut off the fin of a shark, it will grow back and the shark will survive.

FACT: If a shark has its fin removed and is consequently returned to the ocean, under almost all circumstances the shark will not survive. Unlike salamanders or sea stars that can regrow limbs that have been cut off, sharks do not possess any regenerative properties that would allow them to regrow their fins.



Shortfin Pacific Mako.



Blue shark

MYTH: Sharks frequent swimming areas looking for any opportunity to attack a human.

FACT: Most of the "attacks" on humans are a mistake, whereby the shark confuses a swimmer with its natural prey. On the rare occasion a shark bites a human, it generally leaves the area after doing so. This is why so few attacks on humans are fatal.



MYTH: Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) provide the ultimate protection for sharks because they prohibit the removal of anything within their boundaries.

FACT: Sharks can be protected within certain MPA boundaries. However, the effectiveness of an MPA is limited by its size, species found within the boundaries of the MPA, and the level of enforcement.



Thresher shark on hook.



Blacknose shark.

MYTH: There is a high risk of being attacked by a shark if you swim in the ocean.

FACT: Despite the public attention given to shark attacks, the likelihood of being attacked by a shark is very low. By comparison, there is a higher risk of being seriously injured by a falling television, toilet, window blind, aggressive dog, lawnmower, or lightning.

MYTH: Sharks live only in the ocean.

FACT: Sharks and their relatives—skates, rays, sawfishes and chimeras—are found in a variety of habitats from the deep ocean to river and lakes. For example, freshwater stingrays are found in the upper portions of the Amazon River; bull sharks are found in the open ocean as well as rivers and lakes; and goblin sharks can be found in the deepest portions of the ocean.



Bull shark.

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