

Sandtiger Shark

(*Carcharias taurus*)

Habitat and Distribution: Found in shallow inshore waters across most of the world's oceans except for the eastern Pacific. They are found in the Western Atlantic from the northern US to Argentina, and in the Eastern Atlantic from the coast of Europe to North Africa, and in Australia. They are often seen drifting or hovering over rocky outcroppings. They occasionally enter freshwater.

Size: Average 4–9 feet, up to 12 feet in length; up to 350 pounds

Wild Diet: Small fish such as mackerel, menhaden, flounder, sea trout, as well as skates, crab, lobster and squid

Predators: Humans, juveniles are susceptible to predation by a variety of larger sharks

Lifespan: 16–50 years

Reproduction: Males and females mature at about 6–7 feet long. Breeding season begins in November and continues through February. Sand tiger sharks are ovoviviparous (eggs develop and hatch in the mother's body and young are born live) and give birth to two pups. Sand tiger pups are ovophagous, meaning that they eat the other eggs in the uterus so that only one embryo in each uterus survives. Gestation is unknown.

Behavior: Sedentary and territorial usually hovering around coral or rock crevices and shipwrecks. When free swimming, they usually skirt along the outcroppings of coral reefs. They often gulp air at the surface and hold it in their stomachs to help them stay buoyant (floating) in the water. They are most active at night.

Conservation Connection: Status: Secure/Vulnerable. Currently sandtiger sharks are regulated on the east coast of the United States and in a few other parts of the world. They are still recovering from overfishing in Australia and South Africa.

Interesting Fact: Female sandtiger sharks have two uteruses, which is why they almost always have two pups. Sandtiger's have so many teeth that stick up and out of their mouths – they can't close their mouths all the way! This is one of the reasons people think they look scary. This shark is actually quite harmless. The sandtiger is also known as grey nurse shark, ground shark, spotted raggedtooth shark, and spotted sandtiger shark.

