

## Japanese Wobbegong Shark

*(Orectolobus japonicus)*

**Habitat and Distribution:** Found in shallow tropical and subtropical waters of the Pacific Ocean, including Japan, Korea, China, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Australia. They are most commonly found on rocky and coral reefs and on the sandy bottom, from the intertidal zone down to 350 feet.

**Size:** Up to 3 feet in length; 40–50 pounds

**Wild Diet:** Small fish, crabs, shrimp and other invertebrates

**Predators:** Humans, any large fish or marine mammal

**Lifespan:** Unknown

**Reproduction:** Japanese wobbegongs are ovoviviparous (eggs develop and hatch in the mother's body and young are born live) and give birth to 1–27 pups after a 12-month gestation period.

Sharks in general reproduce slowly, bear few young at a time, have a long gestation period, and many swim great distances to find a mate. That is why it takes years for their populations to rebound after a serious decline from overfishing.

**Behavior:** Instead of actively hunting for food, Wobbegongs rest on the bottom, and ambush animals that swim close, grasping prey with their sharp, fanglike teeth.

**Conservation Connection:** Status: Uncertain. Interest to fisheries is limited, though they are caught in set nets in Japan and used for human consumption; also taken in China, Korea and Vietnam.

**Interesting Facts:** The Japanese wobbegong shark has a flattened, broad body and short tail. Sensitive barbels (look like fleshy whiskers) and fringe around the mouth help them to find prey on the reefs and ocean floor. Their spots, blotches, and stripes provide excellent camouflage on the sea bottom. This nocturnal shark is rarely seen by divers.

