



FACT SHEET

Tiger Shark

Galeocerdo cuvier

Family: Carcharhinidae

Other common names: Tierhaai

Description

A very large shark with a short, bluntly rounded snout. The body is covered with distinctive dark grey bars running down the upper sides. These are particularly evident in juveniles but fade in adults with age. They have a large mouth with serrated, cockscomb-shaped teeth.

Distribution

Worldwide in warm-temperate, subtropical and tropical seas. In southern African waters they are found as far south as Cape St Francis.

Habitat

Adults are found both in coastal waters and far offshore in warm temperate and tropical waters. In South Africa, the northeast coast forms part of an important habitat for tiger sharks throughout the year, whilst they often undertake southward migrations during summer. Juveniles are found in coastal waters in tropical regions. There are no known nursery areas for tiger sharks on the South African coast.

Feeding

They have one of the most diverse diets of any known shark species, which includes marine mammals, sea birds, other sharks and rays, bony fish and squid. It is also a well known scavenger. There are changes in the diet as sharks grow bigger with juveniles restricted to smaller prey such as smaller fish and squid.

Movement

Considered to be nomadic. Tag-recapture data has shown that while some individuals appear to maintain large home ranges and return to specific areas on a regular basis, others undertake long distance movements covering thousands of kilometres and have been reported travelling from South Africa to Mozambique and Madagascar.

Reproduction

Females mature at a size of 273 cm precaudal length and an age of 11 years, while males mature at a length of 247 cm precaudal length and an age of 8 years. Mating occurs mainly in spring with gestation lasting 13-16 months with pupping occurring during the following summer. Puppings occurs in tropical areas and there is little evidence of breeding in South African waters. They are ovoviviparous (no placental connection) and produce litters of between 10-82 pups.

Age and growth

They can reach a maximum size of 550 cm total length and a weight of 807 kg. They have been aged up to a maximum of 50 years.

Current status

While their current status in South African waters is not known, there has been an increase in catches made by the KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board between 1978-2010. However, tiger sharks remain vulnerable to fisheries in Mozambique, the high seas and culling programs in Reunion. They have been evaluated as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List (2018).

South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) List:
Not assessed.



Not
Assessed

Capture

A relatively rare catch in KwaZulu-Natal recreational shore and ski-boat fisheries. Approximately 60 (mainly immature) individuals are caught each year in the KwaZulu-Natal bather protection programme but survival rate is high with about 25 sharks released alive.

Current recreational fishing regulations

Daily bag limit: 1 per person per day

Minimum size limit: None

Closed Season: None

Other regulations: None

Marine protected areas (MPAs): Tiger sharks are relatively common in the iSimangaliso MPA where they may receive some protection. They are also a focus species for the shark diving operations in the Aliwal Shoal and Protea Banks MPAs.

Reference

Information from the ORI Fish App. www.saambr.org.za



INCORPORATING

