

Sharks Fact File

Top facts



You are more likely to be killed by a lawnmower, vending machine or coconut than a shark attack.



Sharks have been around for around 455 million years.



Some sharks lay eggs and some sharks give birth to live young.



Sharks don't have bones but instead have cartilaginous skeletons.



There are 1,107 described Chondrichthyan species around the world - these include sharks, rays, skates and chimaeras. Of those species, there are 432 species of sharks.



Makos are the fastest shark in the ocean reaching up to 45mph

Sharks in the UK

Over 40 different species of shark have been observed in UK waters, and 21 of those species live in the UK throughout the year.



Basking shark © 12019/10259
images via Pixabay

Basking sharks can reach lengths of up to 12 metres, making them the second largest shark. These gentle giants are filter feeders, mostly dining on plankton. Their huge mouths can open up to one metre wide!

The basking shark is a seasonal visitor to the UK, so the best time to spot one is between May and October.

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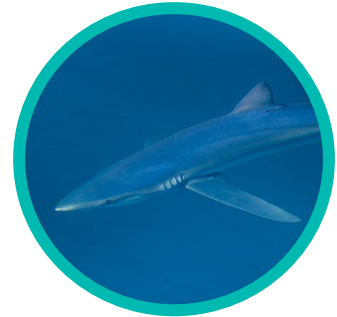
Blue sharks are migratory; each year they make huge trans-Atlantic migrations and can travel 5000 miles in one trip. They visit the UK in the summer. They migrate in a “school”, or larger group.

Angel sharks are nocturnal. They inhabit sandy or muddy areas of the seabed, and bury themselves during the daytime. They are critically endangered. Their numbers have declined dramatically during the last 50 years, to the point where they have been declared extinct in the North Sea.

Small spotted catsharks are also known as lesser-spotted dogfish. This is the most common shark in the UK. They live in shallow waters spending their time close to the seabed. They are small sharks approx. 75cm in length. Their egg cases, commonly known as mermaid purses, can often be found washed up on beaches.

Greenland sharks are the second largest species of carnivorous shark after the great white. They are found in very deep waters and sometimes referred to as the world’s most mysterious shark. Footage of Greenland sharks swimming in their natural environment was not captured until 2003. Many Greenland sharks have a small parasite attached to their eyes, which slowly causes the shark to go blind.

Research has shown that these fascinating creatures could live to around 400 years old, making them the longest-lived vertebrates on the planet!



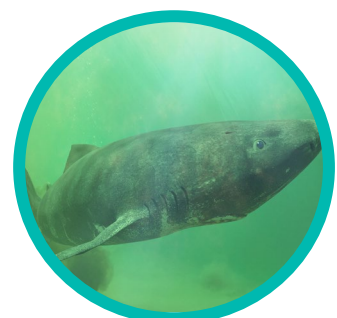
Blue shark © [Adam Searcy](#) via Flickr



Angel shark © Luis Miguel Estevez via Shutterstock



Small-spotted catshark © [David Ceballos](#) via Flickr



Greenland shark © Dotted Yeti via Shutterstock

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Feeding and diet

Sharks' teeth are adapted to their diet, some have sharp teeth for piercing and slicing prey, others have blunt teeth for crushing and some are filter feeders with very small teeth that they don't actually use for feeding. All sharks regularly lose and replace their teeth. Sharks can have on average 12-13 rows of teeth – the bull shark has a whopping 50 rows of teeth!



Basking shark
© [jidanchaomian](#) via Flickr

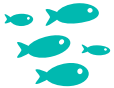


Cookie cutter shark teeth
© [JSUBiology](#) via Flickr

Threats to Sharks



Sharks have been around for millions of years, but today they are in serious decline, with many shark species under threat of extinction. Sharks are slow-growing species, with some sharks like hammerheads producing very few young, making them more susceptible to threats.



Sharks are at the top of the food chain in virtually every location they're found. Their presence indicates a healthy marine ecosystem. If we lose sharks, something will have gone seriously wrong with our seas.



It's estimated that a staggering 100 million sharks are killed every year worldwide because of unsustainable fishing practices, shark finning, overfishing, pollution and habitat destruction. If this continues, we are in danger of losing many of our iconic shark species forever.