

How to Spy on Sharks

Fish Finders

A pointy gray fin, a toothy smile-almost everyone knows what a shark looks like. But scientists don't know much about how the big fish live. That's starting to change.



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By learning where sharks spend their time, scientists can help protect the animals from danger.

Scientists have been collecting information about sharks around the world with satellite tracking tags. Researchers place the tags into the flesh of a shark and release the fish into the water. The tags collect information about where the sharks travel and how deep and fast they swim. Scientists program the tags to stay fastened to the shark for a certain amount of time and then pop off and float to the ocean's surface. Then the tags send the information they gathered to a satellite in space, which transmits the information to the scientists.

Satellite tags help scientists learn which shark species migrate (move from one area to another), where they go, and what they do there. A few years ago, researchers tracked a great white shark that traveled from Africa to Australia and back. The shark, nick-named Nicole, swam 12,400 miles in nine months. That's halfway around the planet!

Saving Sharks

People often think of sharks as fearsome killers, but the truth is that people pose a great danger to sharks.

Shark attacks always make the news, but they are rare. The International Shark Attack File says that, on average, sharks kill five to 15 people a year worldwide. Every summer, the number of shark attacks begins to rise compared with previous months, but researchers say it is not because sharks are more aggressive. The reason for the increase is that people are spending more time in the water-surfing, swimming, and fishing in shark habitat. Still, an attack is very unlikely. A person is 30 times more likely to be killed by lightning than by a shark.

Meanwhile, fishermen kill about 100 million sharks each year. Populations of great white sharks and other species are shrinking. Scientists hope to discover important areas where sharks like to spend time so those areas can be protected.

Shark Sub

Ocean explorer Fabien Cousteau has created a shark shaped submarine! Cousteau, the grandson of famed ocean explorer Jacques Cousteau, has traveled inside the shark sub to see how sharks behave when they don't know they are being watched.