

Perhaps most interesting is the unique bioelectrical sensory system that sharks can use to detect and home in on the weak electric fields produced by all live animals, even if they are buried in sand.

The eagle ray beats its wings like a bird as opposed to the short tail stingray which undulates or 'ripples' its wings to move.

The warm blooded mako shark was well known by Maori who gave it the name by which it is known worldwide.

Since 1852 in New Zealand there has been, on average, only one fatal shark attack every 13 years.

If threatened, the swell shark bends its body into a sharp U-shape, grasps its tail-fin in its mouth and swallows a large quantity of sea water, which makes it swell to twice its normal size.

In the 1970's the US Navy were confused by crescent shaped gouges that appeared in rubber housings on its submarines—later found to be the work of the cookie-cutter shark!

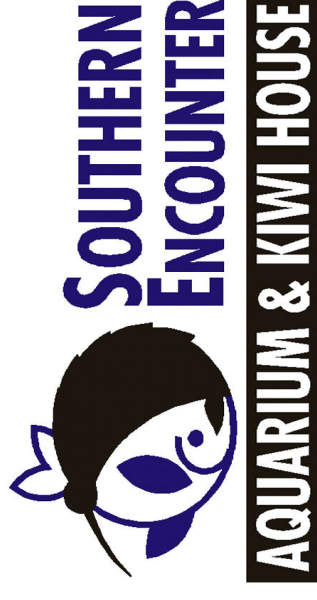
Rays and sharks can evert (stick out) their rectum to clear a blockage—yuck!

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*Did you know?* 5



*Sharks and Rays*



The largest fish ever caught was a Whale Shark. It was 18 metres long. These fish can weigh up to 15 tons.

The bodies of sharks, rays and skates contain no bones—their skeletons are made of cartilage the same as the wiggly part of your nose.

Largest ocean carnivore is the Great White Shark at 7 metres in length. It has never been successfully kept in captivity.

The carpet shark was the first New Zealand fish to be given a Latin name, in 1788.

Worldwide, on average, fewer than ten people are killed by sharks each year—but 100 million sharks are killed by people.

Stingrays are normally peaceful and harmless, but they will defend themselves if harassed—in 1938 a North Island man died after being stabbed through the heart by a stingray's tail-barb.

The school shark or tope has a pregnancy period of up to 24 months, the longest of any known animal (an elephant has a pregnancy of 18-22 months).

A basking shark washed up on a Christchurch beach in 2000 measuring 13.2 metres—the second longest ever recorded.

Carpet shark egg-cases produce antifouling chemicals to prevent them being overgrown by other organisms as they develop.

The smallest shark, the dwarf shark, is only 25 cm (10 inches) long.

Sharks have been around since the Upper Devonian, approximately 409 million years ago.

Great White Sharks can go as long as three months without eating.

Shark jaws are mobile (not firmly attached to their skulls like ours) so that they can be pushed out to take a large bite.

Sharks can have up to 3,000 teeth in their mouth arranged in rows of 6 to 20. New teeth continually grow and move forwards from the back rows to replace those that wear down and fall out in the front. A shark can get through up to 20,000 teeth in a lifetime.

The female school shark can store a male's sperm for up to 2 years before fertilising her eggs when conditions are right.

The biggest shark species has the smallest teeth. The 12 metre long whale shark has more than 4,000 teeth, each only 3mm long.

Fast-swimming sharks such as the shortfin mako have been recorded as travelling over 2,000 km in 37 days.

Of the more than 350 species of shark in the world's oceans only a handful of them are even considered dangerous to humans.

Sharks and rays have numerous pit organs (like taste buds) scattered along their body—allowing them to taste the water without having to swallow it.

A large electric ray can discharge a shock of more than 200 volts at 5 amperes.

The rough skate was originally described by Captain Cook on his first visit to New Zealand.