



Image courtesy:  
Department of Fisheries, Western Australia.



FACTSHEET

# Great White Shark



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**Common Name:** Great White Shark

**Scientific Name:** *Carcharodon carcharias*

**Conservation Status:** Listed as Vulnerable under ICUN (2014). Listed as Vulnerable under Wildlife Conservation Act 1950 (Western Australia). Listed as Vulnerable under EPBC Act 1999. The waters around Rottnest Island are a designated Marine Reserve.

**Habitat:** Inshore waters, offshore waters

**Body length:** 4.6-6 m

**Weight:** 2-3 tonnes

**Gestation period:** 18 months

**Number of young:** 2-17

## Description:

The Great White is a very large shark. It has a well-built, streamlined, torpedo shaped body. It has blueish grey, greyish brown or bronzy upper surfaces. It has white under surfaces which gives it its name.

Its large triangular dorsal fin is noticeable.

Its snout is quite short and a blunt

cone-shaped. It has five gill slits and its eyes are blackish dark blue. Its mouth reaches past its eyes and it has 300 serrated (saw-like) triangular teeth arranged in several rows.

## Diet:

Sea lions, seals, dolphins, whales, other sharks, fish, rays, sea turtles, sea birds, carrion (dead animals)

## In the wild:

The Great White Shark is an apex predator. This means that it is at the top of the food chain.

These sharks have very good colour vision and use their exceptional sense of smell to detect prey. They also have organs that can sense the tiny electromagnetic fields generated by animals.

Great Whites stalk their prey from underneath and then attack on the surface. Their powerful tails mean they are fast swimmers. They can reach up to 24 km/h and can leap completely out of the water when attacking.



The Great White lives either by itself or in pairs. These sharks are migratory. They move up the coast during spring and move back down during the summer. Have been recorded swimming several hundred kilometres off shore and crossing open ocean. They have also been known to dive down to 600m.

### **Threats:**

- Intentional killing/harm to harvest body parts
- Accidental injury and death from commercial fishing
- Human disturbance particularly from tourism activities and protection measures like shark nets
- Pollution

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

Great Whites are believed to be responsible for one third to one half of shark attacks worldwide but most of these attacks are not fatal. New research shows that Great Whites are naturally curious and are “sample-biting”. This means they bite their prey to test whether it is a suitable food source. If it is not, they release their victim.