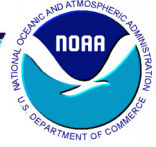




NOAA FISHERIES FACT SHEET



Bull Shark

Bull sharks are one of the top three sharks implicated in unprovoked fatal attacks throughout the world.

Scientific name: *Carcharhinus leucas*

Distribution: Off the Atlantic coast of the United States bull sharks are found from Massachusetts (rare north of Delaware) to the Gulf of Mexico and are common off southeastern Florida and in the Gulf of Mexico. Off the Pacific coast bull sharks are found from southern California (rare) to the Gulf of California.

What is an Apex Predator?

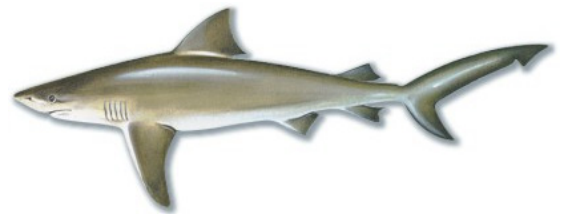
Sharks are considered apex predators because they prey on many species lower on the food chain, have few natural predators themselves, and are less abundant than their prey

Habitat: This species can be found primarily in shallow coastal waters and is common in lagoons, bays, and river mouths. Bull sharks can also be found in fresh water that connects with salt water and have been caught in the Mississippi River as far upstream as Illinois.

Life history: This species reaches maturity at about 6 years and lives at least 14 years. Number of pups per litter ranges from 1 to 13. Bull sharks can grow to about 11.5 feet in length, although they rarely grow past 9 feet.

Management: In the Atlantic, bull sharks are part of the large coastal shark management group, which is overfished; commercial and recreational fishing regulations are in place for this species. In the Pacific, bull sharks are not landed in commercial and recreational fisheries and no management measures are in place for this species. Finning is prohibited.

Fast Facts About Sharks



Sharks are vulnerable to fishing pressure because they:

- Grow slowly
- Take many years to mature (12 to 18 years in some species)
- Often reproduce only every other year
- Have few young per brood (only 2 pups in some species)
- Have specific requirements for nursery areas (bays and estuaries)
- Are caught in many types of fishing gear (hook and line, gillnet, trawl)

Sharks have adaptations allowing them to be apex predators including:

- Teeth that are replaced throughout their life
- Sensitive smell receptors
- Eyes that adapt quickly to low light levels
- Lateral line receptors that sense movement in the water
- Electroreceptors that detect electrical fields due to the presence of prey

For Further Information Contact: Susan Buchanan (301) 713-2370

Illustration by Dawn Witherington, Melbourne Beach, FL, courtesy Vetrol Data Systems, Inc.