

Whale Sharks

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About Whale shark:

- It is the **largest fish in the world** and the largest fish known to have lived on this planet.
- They are one of only three species of filter feeding sharks.
- **Distribution:** They can be found in **all temperate and tropical oceans** around the world, except the Mediterranean Sea.
- **Appearance**
 - They are **dark gray on top** and light underneath, with a series of light spots or stripes covering the dark parts of their bodies. This helps to **camouflage** them as they swim.
 - Unlike most shark species, its **mouth** is **located at the front** of the **head** (terminal) instead of the underside of the rostrum (subterminal).
 - They are **filter feeders** and can neither bite nor chew. They can process more than 6,000 litres of water an hour through their gills.
 - Inside the mouth are specialized flaps **called velums**. These stop the backflow of water as the whale shark closes its mouth, preventing the loss of food.
- **Food Habit:** They feed on **plankton** and travel large distances to find enough food to sustain their huge size, and to reproduce.

- They also eat small and large fish and mollusks, including sardines, anchovies, mackerels, squid, and even small tuna and albacore.
 - **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN:** Endangered
 - **Wildlife Protection Act 1972:** Schedule I
 - **Threats:** The whale sharks continue to face challenges primarily due to **bycatch** and accidental **capture in fishing nets**, illegal hunting and habitat degradation.
 - A global study indicates that over the past 75 years, the world's whale shark population has decreased by 50%.
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Q1: What are Cetaceans?

Cetaceans are a group of marine mammals that include whales, dolphins, and porpoises. They are well-adapted to life in aquatic environments and have a variety of unique features that enable them to thrive in the ocean.

Source: [International Whale Shark Day: Saving the gentle giants of the sea along the Indian coast](#)

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/whale-sharks/>

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