



Reading Handout: All about the Blue Shark



Beautiful and elegant are not words often associated with sharks, but they seem appropriate for the sleek blue shark. Its streamlined, indigo-blue body seems to move effortlessly from the surface to the deep sea that it favors.

Description

Its large pectoral fins help with swimming, but its secret to **buoyancy** is a giant, oil-filled liver. This makes it easier for the shark to travel incredibly long distances. One tagged blue shark traveled from New York to Brazil, a distance of over 3,740 miles.

Feeding Habits

Blue sharks eat until they almost burst. Researchers have observed groups of the shark approach schools of anchovies. They will feed enthusiastically and then will later **regurgitate**, before starting to feed once again. In addition to anchovies, they also consume mackerel, sardines, birds, seals, turtles and squid. **Gill rakers** help to prevent the slippery squid from escaping. The shark's quest for food sometimes compels it to dive to depths of 1,500 feet or more.

Growth & Reproduction

The blue shark is a **viviparous** species, nourishing the young in the uterus and giving birth to live pups. Once the eggs have been fertilized there is a gestation period of between 9 and 12 months. The new-born pups measure 16 to 20 inches in length and litters usually consist of between 25 to 50 individuals. Litters of up to 135 pups have been reported. Females reach maturity at a size of 7 to 11 feet, while for males it is achieved at lengths of 6 to 9 feet.

Habitat and Range

In temperate waters the blue shark is a wide ranging **pelagic** species occurring near the surface. In tropical waters the blue shark is more commonly found in deeper waters as it prefers cooler temperatures between 7 and 16 degrees Celsius. The blue shark occurs in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans in both inshore and offshore waters.

Conservation Concerns

This is the considered most "fished" shark of all shark species. They are caught for their fins, shark skin, tails and flesh. Sadly, over 10 million of these sharks are killed due to human capture every year. Conservation efforts are being taken, globally to save these majestic animals.