

# Basic Shark Safety Tips

The risk of being injured by a shark is extremely low; however, any person entering the ocean should remember that they are visiting the territory of sharks and act accordingly. All ocean users can greatly reduce the potential risk by learning about sharks, using common sense, and observing a few safety tips:

- 1 Enter the water with other people and stay close to assistance.
- 2 Do not enter the water if you have open wounds or are bleeding.
- 3 Stay away from murky waters, harbor entrances, areas near stream mouths, channels, or steep drop-offs.
- 4 Do not provoke or harass a shark, even a small one.
- 5 Swim or surf at beaches patrolled by lifeguards, and follow their advice.
- 6 Stay out of the ocean at dawn, dusk and night, when inshore shark activity peaks.
- 7 Remove speared fish from the water or tow them a safe distance behind you. Do not swim near people fishing or spearfishing. Stay away from dead animals in the water.

If you witness any shark harassment, call the Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement at **1-808-984-8110**.

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# HAWAI'I WILDLIFE WATCHING GUIDE



## Sharks of Hawai'i



# Common Inshore Shark Species



**Blacktip Reef Shark**  
[*Carcharhinus melanopterus*]

**Hawaiian name:** Manō pā'ele

**ID:** Black tipped fins; white band extends from anal fin into tan area on sides

**Length:** Usually less than 4 feet, maximum 6 feet

**Diet:** Reef fishes

**Habitat:** Shallow waters



**Galapagos Shark**  
[*Carcharhinus galapagensis*]

**Hawaiian name:** Manō

**ID:** Large first dorsal fin with nearly vertical rear edge

**Length:** Up to 10-12 feet

**Eats:** Bottom fishes

**Habitat:** Outer reef to deep water, occasionally inshore waters near drop-offs



**Blacktip Shark**  
[*Carcharhinus limbatus*]

**Hawaiian name:** Manō

**ID:** Fins dark at tips, white band extends from anal fin into gray area on side

**Length:** Up to 8 feet

**Diet:** Bony fishes, occasionally cephalopods and crustaceans

**Habitat:** Open ocean and coastal waters



**Gray Reef Shark**  
[*Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos*]

**Hawaiian name:** Manō

**ID:** All fins except first dorsal are dark or dark margined

**Length:** Usually 3-5 feet, maximum 7 feet

**Diet:** Bony fishes, some cephalopods and crustaceans

**Habitat:** Deeper waters on outer edges of reefs



## Sandbar Shark

[*Carcharhinus plumbeus*]

**Hawaiian name:** Manō

**ID:** Large, erect dorsal fin set forward on body, sloping forehead

**Length:** Up to 5–6 feet

**Diet:** Reef fishes and crustaceans

**Habitat:** Shoreline, harbors and bays



## Tiger Shark

[*Galeocerdo cuvier*]

**Hawaiian name:** Niuhi

**ID:** Short, vertical bars on sides; broad, blunt snout

**Length:** Usually 8–12 feet, up to 18 feet or longer

**Eats:** Wide variety of marine animals and carrion

**Habitat:** Ranges widely throughout the Hawaiian archipelago, from shallow reefs to offshore deep waters



## Scalloped Hammerhead Shark

[*Sphyrna lewini*]

**Hawaiian name:** Manō kihikihi

**ID:** Four shallow lobes along front margin of head

**Length:** Usually 6–8 feet, up to 14 feet

**Diet:** Reef fishes, sharks and rays, cephalopods, crustaceans

**Habitat:** Inshore and far at sea; more common in shallow waters during spring and summer months



## Whitetip Reef Shark

[*Triaenodon obesus*]

**Hawaiian name:** Manō lālākea

**ID:** White tipped first dorsal and caudal fins

**Length:** Usually 2–3 feet, maximum 6 feet

**Diet:** Reef fishes, octopuses

**Habitat:** Shoreline, shallow reefs

## Threats to Sharks



Millions of sharks are killed each year by human activity worldwide. Common threats to sharks include bycatch (catch of unintentional species by indiscriminate fishing methods), pollution, habitat damage, and, most significantly, shark finning.

Shark finning is the practice of catching sharks, removing their fins and throwing the shark back into the water – sometimes while the animal is still alive. The fins are sold to the lucrative Asian shark fin soup market. Shark finning is illegal in U.S. waters.

Sharks are top-level predators. They control fish populations, which keeps the entire ocean ecosystem in balance. Many species of sharks are now threatened or endangered. Shark species worldwide have declined by nearly 90%, with many species facing extinction.

## Sharks of Hawai'i



There are approximately forty species of sharks that regularly occur in Hawaiian waters. The eight species most commonly seen near shore are described in this pamphlet. Most species found near shore pose little threat to people, and encounters between sharks and humans in Hawaiian waters are infrequent. Popular culture and mass media have given sharks an undeserved negative reputation. Incidents of sharks biting people in Hawaiian waters are very rare.

Sharks have great significance in Hawaiian culture. Sharks, collectively known as manō, are celebrated by Hawaiians in story and song. A skilled lover or fearsome warrior was compared to a shark. Hawaiians also used the skin of the manō for pahu drums and for sanding canoes, and their teeth for cutting tools and weapons of warfare.

Perhaps most significantly, some families in Hawai'i claim a specific shark as their 'aumakua – a deified ancestor that may assume animal forms. Families with shark 'aumakua did not eat shark, and cared for their particular 'aumakua by feeding it. In return for their actions they received protection and council from the 'aumakua.