



# MYSTIC AQUARIUM

## Sand Tiger Shark *Carcharias Taurus*



**Size:** A large shark, the sand tiger shark reaches an average size from six to nine feet in length and up to 300 pounds.

**Appearance:** Sand tiger sharks are easily recognizable by their numerous protruding teeth and large, notched upper lobe of the tail. The young sharks at Mystic Aquarium will have dark spots throughout their brown or grey body but these spots will fade as they mature.

**Range/Distribution:** These sharks have a wide distribution and can be found in subtropical and warm temperate waters around the world (with the exception of the eastern Pacific Ocean). This includes the western Atlantic from the Gulf of Maine to Florida.

**Habitat:** Found anywhere from shallow bays to coral reefs, these sharks can be found in coastal regions around the world (with the exception of the eastern Pacific Ocean).

**Prey:** These sharks primarily eat fish but will also feed on smaller sharks, rays, squid, crabs, lobsters, and squid.

**Predators:** Although young sand tiger sharks can fall prey to larger shark species, adults of these species have no major predators.

**Reproduction:** The gestation length is anywhere between 9 to 12 months and these sharks are ovoviparous (eggs hatch within the body so young are born alive). Sand tiger sharks will give birth once every two years to two pups approximately 3 feet in length. The reason for the small litter size is that the largest embryo in each uterine horn will eat smaller developing embryos and eggs. This is called uterine cannibalism.

**Conservation Status:** Critically endangered

**What is being done?:** Named a species of concern by the National Marine Fisheries Service in 1997, it is illegal to catch this species along the Atlantic coast of the US.

**Threats:** Causes of concern for the sand tiger shark include: Fishing for fishmeal, liver oil, and fins, accidental catching (bycatch) Low reproductive rate and limited ability to increase population quickly affect the population's ability to rebound.

**Fun Facts:** The sand tiger shark is known by many names throughout the world, including the grey nurse shark, ground shark, spotted raggedtooth shark, and the slender-tooth shark. That's just to name a few! Like other shark species, sand tiger shark lack a swim (or gas) bladder which is used in other fish species to float in water column. However, unlike any other shark species, sand tiger sharks will surface to take gulps of air. This air is stored in their stomach and used to help them float motionless. A group of sharks is called a school or shoal. Sand tiger sharks are not considered aggressive sharks unless provoked.