

tributaries

MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA AQUARIUM



From the President

I pity the poor menhaden.

You won't find an article about them in this issue. They won't appear on your dinner plate in local restaurants, and they don't star in animated Disney features. And yet, they are perhaps the single most important species of fish swimming off our coast.

What are menhaden, you ask? Sometimes called mossbunker, fat-bat or poge, they are small forage fish that provide sustenance to all manner of species from sharks, whales and dolphins to seals and seabirds. Prolific breeders, they also are used by humans as bait fish and are prized for their fat content in the creation of cooking products and Omega 3 fish-oil capsules.

Menhaden are also filters that help keep the ocean clean. A single adult can clear up four to six gallons of algae in a single minute. But, because they subsist on plankton, they are also increasingly vulnerable to microplastics and the toxins they carry.

In this issue, you'll read about the Aquarium's efforts to create awareness of the plastic pollution epidemic. Already, we are seeing the devastating effects plastic ingestion can have on sea turtle patients that come into our care. We are also just beginning to wake up to the reality that plastics are making their way up the food chain, from plankton to menhaden to – yes – people.

We're grateful to Ingevity for its investment in our new Respond gallery, which educates our visiting public about the risks of plastic pollution. We also are heartened by the many members of our coastal community who have pledged to reduce or eliminate plastic waste, even banning or restricting single-use plastic items from their daily lives.

If menhaden had a voice, they would no doubt say thank you, as well.



Kevin Mills, President and CEO



Leading the way to
connect people
with water, wildlife
and wild places.

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Monday – Friday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Aquarium News



Horseshoe Crab Mating Season Underway

Late spring marks the start of horseshoe crab mating season, and the Aquarium is a perfect location to see these living fossils emerge from the waters of the Charleston Harbor. In recent years, on the beaches next to the Aquarium, horseshoe crabs have congregated during the full and new moons between April and June to spawn. In the past, we saw more than 100 horseshoe crabs in one night alone! If you find yourself strolling through Charleston on a late-night walk in May and June, you may get the opportunity to see this annual phenomenon.



New Laser Tool for Dolphin Research

Photo identification research on our resident Atlantic bottlenose dolphins just became even more informative! A harmless laser will be attached to our researcher's camera to project small dots on the dolphins. These dots, set to a predetermined distance, will give us scaled measurements of each dolphin. This non-invasive way of measuring dolphins will allow researchers to accurately track their growth and development over time. Keep in mind – though it is a violation of federal law for anyone to approach dolphins within 50 yards, our researchers have federal research permits that allow them to approach the animals, photograph them and record their behavior.



Conservation Assistant Volunteer Position

Our newest volunteer role enables South Carolina Aquarium conservation enthusiasts to become a volunteer, from the mountains to the sea! Conservation Assistants can reside anywhere in South Carolina and can help spread the Aquarium's message to protect water, wildlife and wild places into communities statewide. These individuals have the opportunity to recruit citizen scientists in their communities, contribute data to projects in our Citizen Science app, organize litter sweeps, participate in local outreach festivals and events, and more.

If you're interested in becoming a Conservation Assistant, visit scaquarium.org/volunteer.

What's Happening

SEINING PROGRAMS

JUNE 5
6 – 7:30 p.m.
Sullivan's Island

JUNE 19
6 – 7:30 p.m.
Daniel Island

JULY 18
6 – 7:30 p.m.
Folly Beach

AUGUST 2
6 – 7:30 p.m.
Sullivan's Island

AUGUST 15
6 – 7:30 p.m.
Daniel Island

AUGUST 30 (ADULTS ONLY)
6 – 7:30 p.m.
Sullivan's Island

SEPTEMBER 8
10 – 11:30 a.m.
Folly Beach

A member favorite! Assist Aquarium staff as we search the sand and water for aquatic creatures. We'll drag a seine through the surf to find fish, crabs and maybe even a small shark. Educators will give you a glimpse into the fascinating lives of fish, mollusks and other beach dwellers as we walk along. \$10 per member. Reservations required; to reserve, call (843) 579-8518.



JAZZ ON THE HARBOR AN AFTER HOURS EVENT

JUNE 15
7 – 10 p.m.
Aquarium

Jazz up your Friday night plans with an open-air concert overlooking the Charleston Harbor! Sway along to the melodies of jazz music as you stroll through the Aquarium's galleries. Sustainably-sourced small plates from Good Catch partners and a beer and wine bar also provided with purchase of your all-inclusive ticket. This event is 21+. Tickets are \$45 each, and member tickets are \$40. Learn more at scaquarium.org/afterhours.

CRABBING CLINIC

JUNE 23
10 a.m. – noon
Pitt Street Bridge, Mount Pleasant

Join us for a crabbing clinic! In addition to learning about crabbing techniques, get the scoop on crab biology and find out how to minimize your environmental impact while crabbing. Saltwater Recreational Fishing License required. \$10 per member. Reservations required; to reserve, call (843) 579-8518.

MEMBER MOVIE NIGHT

JUNE 25
6:30 – 9 p.m.
Aquarium

Join us for a special evening to watch Finding Nemo in the Great Ocean Tank gallery. Bring a pillow and enjoy this family-friendly film with your marine friends. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., and the movie will begin at 7 p.m. Free for members. Reservations required; to reserve, call (843) 579-8518.



SEA STARS AND STRIPES

JULY 4
7 p.m.
Aquarium

Looking for a stress-free way to celebrate the holiday? Experience the Aquarium and more during this family-friendly 4th of July celebration. Your all-inclusive ticket features tasty American fare, beer and wine bar, and a spectacular display of the fireworks show on the water. Member tickets are \$55 for adults, \$25 for children ages 3-12, and free for toddlers 2 and under. To purchase, call (843) 577-FISH (3474).

DISCOVERY TRAWL

JULY 13
10 – 11:30 a.m. or 12:30 – 2 p.m.
Charleston Maritime Center

Take a one-of-a-kind boat tour in partnership with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR). We'll embark on SCDNR's *Educational Vessel Discovery* and explore the wildlife in the Aquarium's "backyard" by trawling in the Charleston Harbor. Ages 10 and up. \$15 per member. Reservations required; to reserve, call (843) 579-8518.

There's always more to explore

[SCAQUARIUM.ORG/CALENDAR](http://scaquarium.org/calendar)

TADPOLE EXPLORERS

JULY 21
8 – 9 a.m.
Aquarium

Parents and children alike love to explore the Aquarium in the morning! Our 1- to 3-year-old friends get the Aquarium all to themselves and can enjoy stations including building blocks, crafts and animal encounters. Snacks, coffee and muffins will be provided. \$10 per member child; two adults free per child. Reservations required; to reserve, call (843) 579-8518.

SHARK WEEK

JULY 23-27
Aquarium

Find fun shark activities around every corner as we celebrate the ocean's apex predator. Enjoy dive shows, educational experiences and photo opportunities focused on sharks. Shark Week activities are free with membership.

THE LITTLE GYM

AUGUST 7
10 – 10:30 a.m.
Aquarium

The Little Gym helps lay the foundation for children to become coordinated, confident and involved little people! We will build physical, emotional and perceptual skills through active play. This session features warm-ups to directive music, basic tumbling skills, and ball and bubble time. It's serious fun! Recommended for ages 2-5. Free for members. Reservations required; to reserve, call (843) 579-8518.

DANCE MOVES

AUGUST 9
10 – 10:30 a.m.
Aquarium

This fun and energetic preschool class will have your children dancing and having a blast! Explore basic ballet moves, warm ups, stretches, movements across the floor, jumping and turning. Girls and boys ages 2-6 are welcome. Comfortable clothing or dance attire recommended. Free for members. Reservations required; to reserve, call (843) 579-8518.

BEER FROM HERE AN AFTER HOURS EVENT

AUGUST 10
7 – 10 p.m.
Aquarium

Hops, habitats, and a heaping amount of animals await you at this Carolina-led craft beer experience! Enjoy local brews and local wildlife in one setting. Sip on select beers at tasting stations throughout the Aquarium. Sustainably-sourced small plates from Good Catch partners, additional bar refreshments and entertainment are also provided with purchase of your all-inclusive ticket. This event is 21+. Tickets are \$45 each, and member tickets are \$40. Learn more at scaquarium.org/afterhours.

TURTLE TREK

SEPTEMBER 29
5 – 9 p.m.
*Isle of Palms County Park
& The Windjammer*

The Turtle Trek, our 5K sunset beach run and kids' fun run, raises awareness and support for the Sea Turtle Care Center™. Registration includes T-shirt and access to the After Party with awards, food, and music. To register, visit scaquarium.org/turtletrek and enter coupon code SCA18TURTLE for a \$5 discount on registration!



LEGEND: MEMBERS ONLY / PUBLIC EVENT

Why Are **SHARKS** Awesome?

More than 400 shark species inhabit our world's oceans. They come in every shape and size that you could imagine, and they've found ways to survive in nearly every marine area on earth!

Let's learn about some of the fascinating facts that make sharks so exciting. Visit the Aquarium during Shark Week this summer, July 23 to 27, to continue your shark adventure.

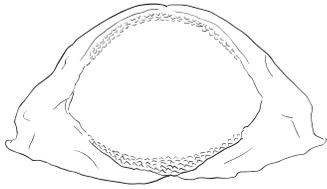




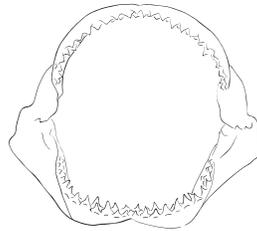
Great Pearly Whites!



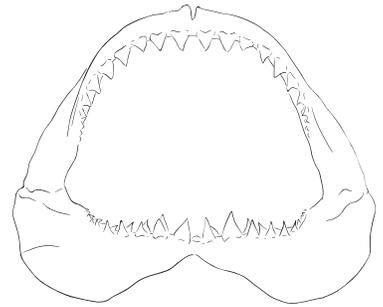
The shape of a shark's tooth can tell us a lot about that animal's feeding habits. Here's how four different species of sharks use their distinct types of teeth to gobble up their favorite meals.



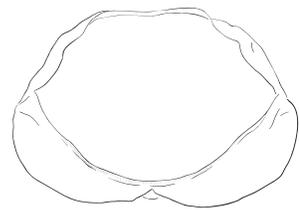
Species like nurse sharks have dense, flattened rows of teeth. These small teeth have jagged edges like a saw. Combined with the nurse shark's strong jaws, they are perfect for crushing crustaceans that live in the sediment like crabs, lobsters and shrimp.



Bull sharks, on the other hand, have sharp, needle-like teeth. Those teeth help them catch slippery, narrow fish like mullet, mackerel and snapper. These sharks are opportunistic predators, meaning that they will eat almost any sea animal they can capture – and that may include stingrays and even other small sharks!



The great white shark has pointed lower teeth and triangular upper teeth that are all angled inward. These sharp, cutting teeth enable the shark to capture and feed on large prey, such as dolphins, whales, seals, turtles and tuna.



Some sharks, like whale sharks, don't use their teeth to eat. Even though these sharks have more than 300 rows of tiny teeth, they filter their food out of the water using specialized pads in their mouths. They feast on large amounts of plankton, krill and fish eggs.

Shark Tooth Hunting

Fossilized shark teeth are abundant on the beaches and shorelines of South Carolina. You may be able to find some of your own! Olivia Wilson of Coastal Expeditions offers the following tips for success on your next tooth hunt:

- **Finding your first shark tooth is the hardest!** However, once you find one, you will start seeing the black, shiny and triangular teeth more often. Look at pictures online, or come by Coastal Expeditions on Shem Creek to see some in person!
- **Read the beach clues** – the slope, direction it faces and time of year all impact where you'll find shark teeth. Pay attention to where other shells and fossils are being deposited.
- **Go at low tide!** On average, our high tides are 6 feet higher than our low tides. That makes a big difference in how much beach is available to fossil hunt, because most teeth are found in the intertidal zone.

You are welcome to keep the toothy treasures you find on local beaches, and you may trade in your fossilized finds at the Aquarium Trading Post for points. If you are a scuba diver and want to collect fossil shark teeth from local rivers, make sure you get a hobby diver license from the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology.



Super Powers of Adaptation

Sharks have ruled the ocean for a long time! Most scientists believe that sharks came into existence more than 400 million years ago. In comparison, dinosaurs first appeared about 230 million years ago, and humans have only been around for about 200,000 years.

Over time, shark species developed a wide variety of adaptations, enabling them to live in almost every marine environment on earth. From their heads to their tail fins, sharks display many unique and useful characteristics. Learn about some of their real-life super powers!

To find their prey in the vast ocean, sharks rely on their **powerful sense of smell**. Like us, sharks have two nostrils, but they use these nostrils only for smelling and not for breathing. Lemon sharks, for example, can detect one part of tuna juice in 25 million parts of seawater.

To survive in the ocean depths, sharks in the lanternshark family have developed the ability to glow in the dark. The sharks use this ability, called **bioluminescence**, to camouflage themselves from predators looking up at them from below, communicate with other sharks, and even find mates.

400

They may not be immortal, but Greenland sharks have the **longest lifespan** of any vertebrate on earth. These old souls can live for at least 400 years and don't even reproduce until age 150! Their longevity may be thanks to their extremely slow growth rate of only about a centimeter per year.

Sharks have a special "sixth sense" – they can detect electric and magnetic fields in the water using special sensing organs called **electroreceptors**. This ability helps them sense prey from far away. They may even use Earth's magnetic field to find their way through the ocean.

Hammerheads may look odd to us, but their head shape is ideal for finding prey. It provides the shark with **binocular vision**, meaning that the field of vision of the eyes overlaps. This allows hammerheads to perceive depth and distance.



Hammerhead Shark (Sphyrnidae)

Inventions Inspired by Sharks

Scientists and innovators can learn a lot from studying the biology of sharks, specifically their skin. Shark skin isn't like traditional fish scales. Instead, it is made up of flat, triangular scales called dermal denticles that are aligned in overlapping rows. The arrangement of these tooth-like scales limits the growth of algae and barnacles, which find it hard to attach to the rough surface. Dermal denticles also streamline sharks' movement, allowing them to swim quickly and quietly.

The unique composition of shark skin has inspired inventors to create a variety of patented products that take advantage of these characteristics in a process called biomimicry. Biomimicry is the practice of copying biological traits (such as dermal denticles) to create and design man-made materials.

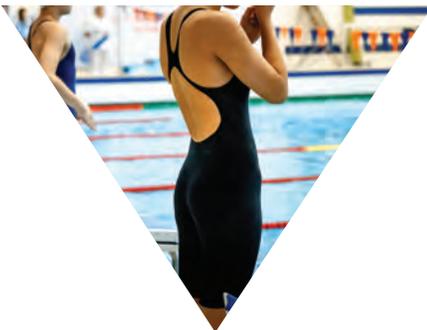


Blacktip Reef Shark (Carcharhinus melanopterus)

For example, Speedo® created a new swimsuit material, called Fastskin, modeled after dermal denticles. These swimsuits were designed and worn by Olympic athletes, but were later banned from the competition because the swimmers wearing them broke so many world records!

Shark skin-like technology has also been used to produce anti-fouling paints for the bottoms of boats, which help prevent hitchhiking animals from attaching themselves to the boats' hulls and decrease the frequency that the boats must be cleaned.

Scientists are currently in the process of creating and testing a product inspired by dermal denticles that would inhibit bacterial and contaminant growth on hospital surfaces.

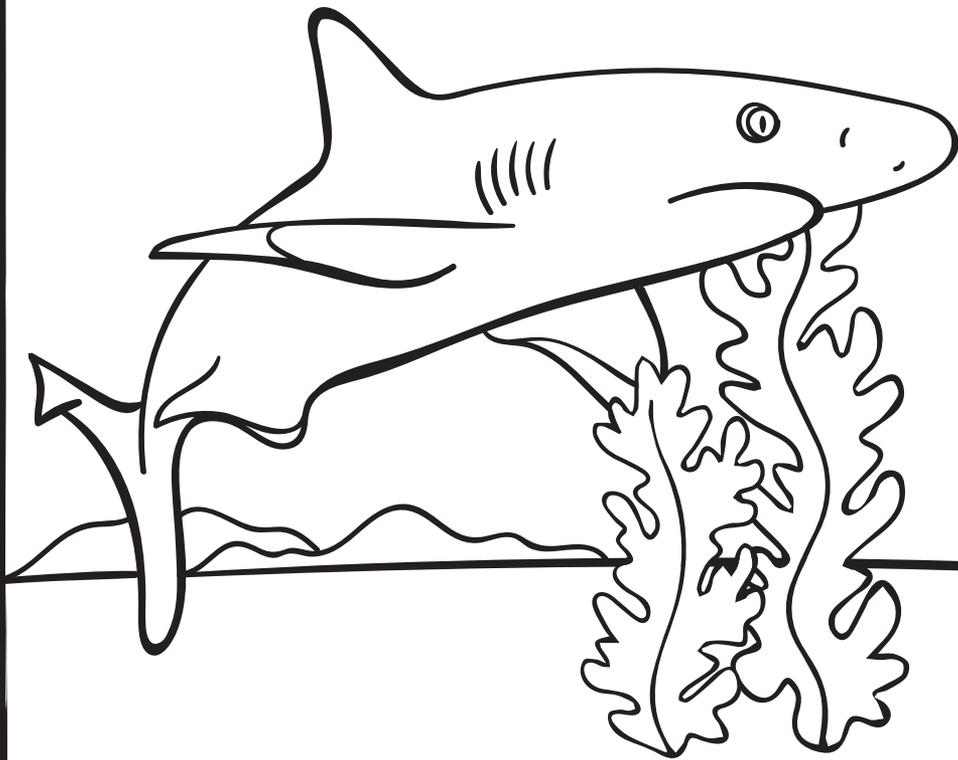


All of this stemmed from the surface of sharks!

tribs

FOR

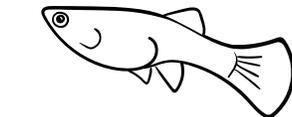
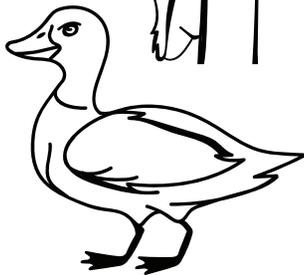
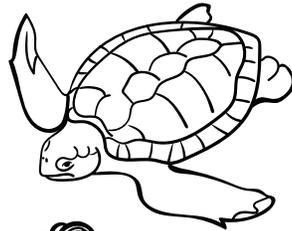
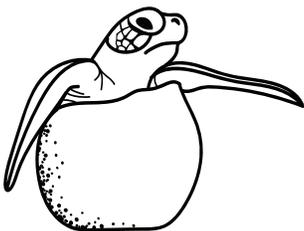
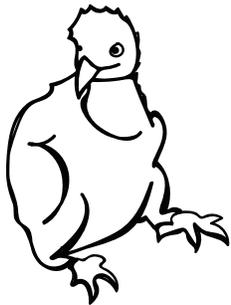
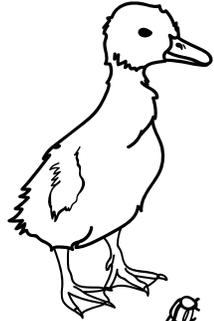
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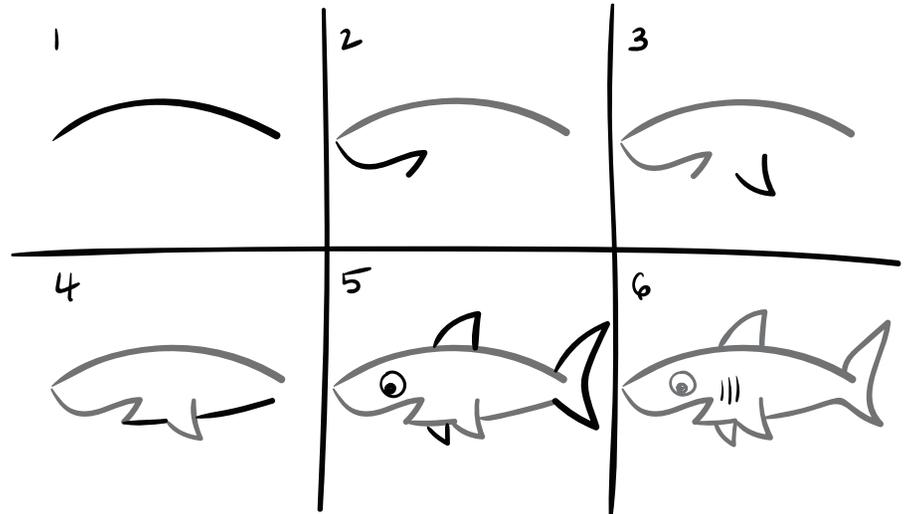
South Carolina
Aquarium

MATCHING

Draw a line to connect each adult animal with its baby. Remember, some baby animals look different than their parents!



How to: DRAW A SHARK



Try it yourself:



Word Scramble:

SEA TURTLES

LGRAODEGEH

IGHTHCANL

NRGEE

RPLIPFE

STNE

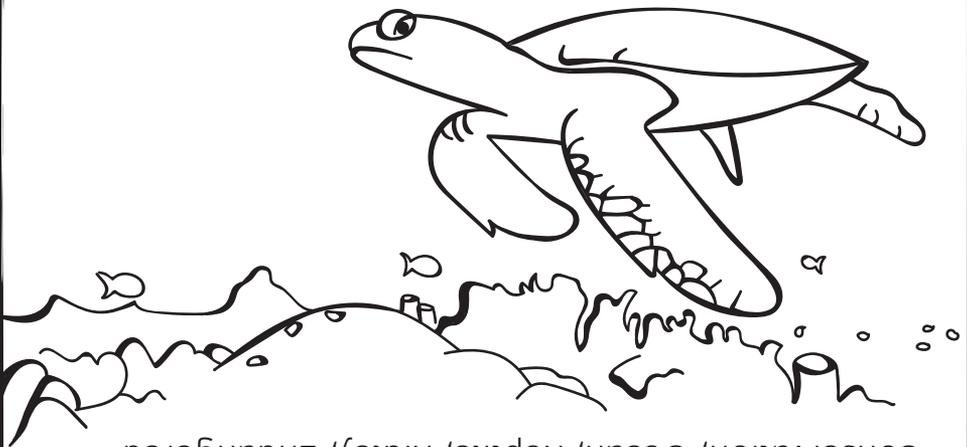
TVNOCRSANIOE

NOACE

RLPEIET

YLDIRE

DERNANGEDE



Answers: Loggerhead, Hatchling, Green, Flipper, Nest, Conservation, Ocean, Reptile, Ridley, Endangered

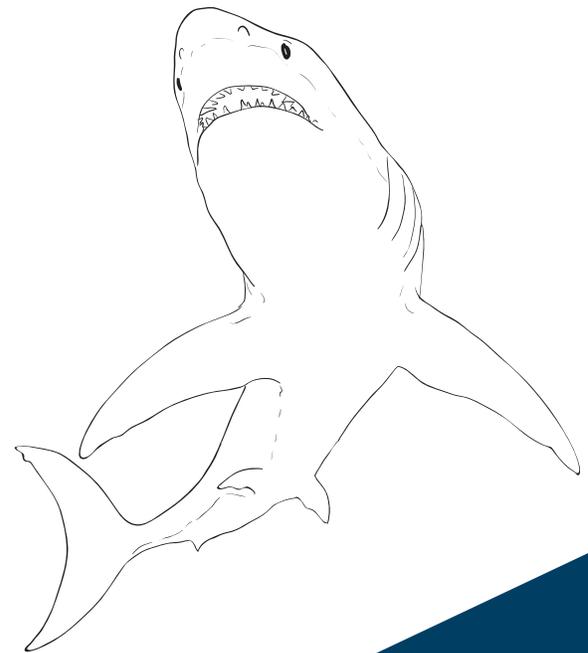
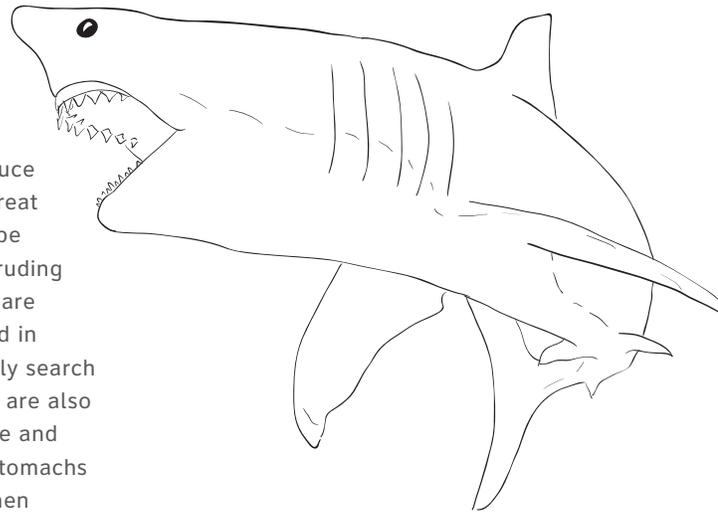
Saving Shark Species

There's so much about sharks that has yet to be discovered, and they play a critical role in maintaining a balanced ocean. Unfortunately, some people can't see past the shark's notorious reputation as the killer of the ocean. That may deter people from understanding how important shark populations are to ocean ecosystems. Sharks are apex predators, meaning that they're at the top of the food chain. Apex predators help maintain a healthy, balanced ecosystem by maintaining the species below them in the food chain and removing sick and weak individuals from prey populations.

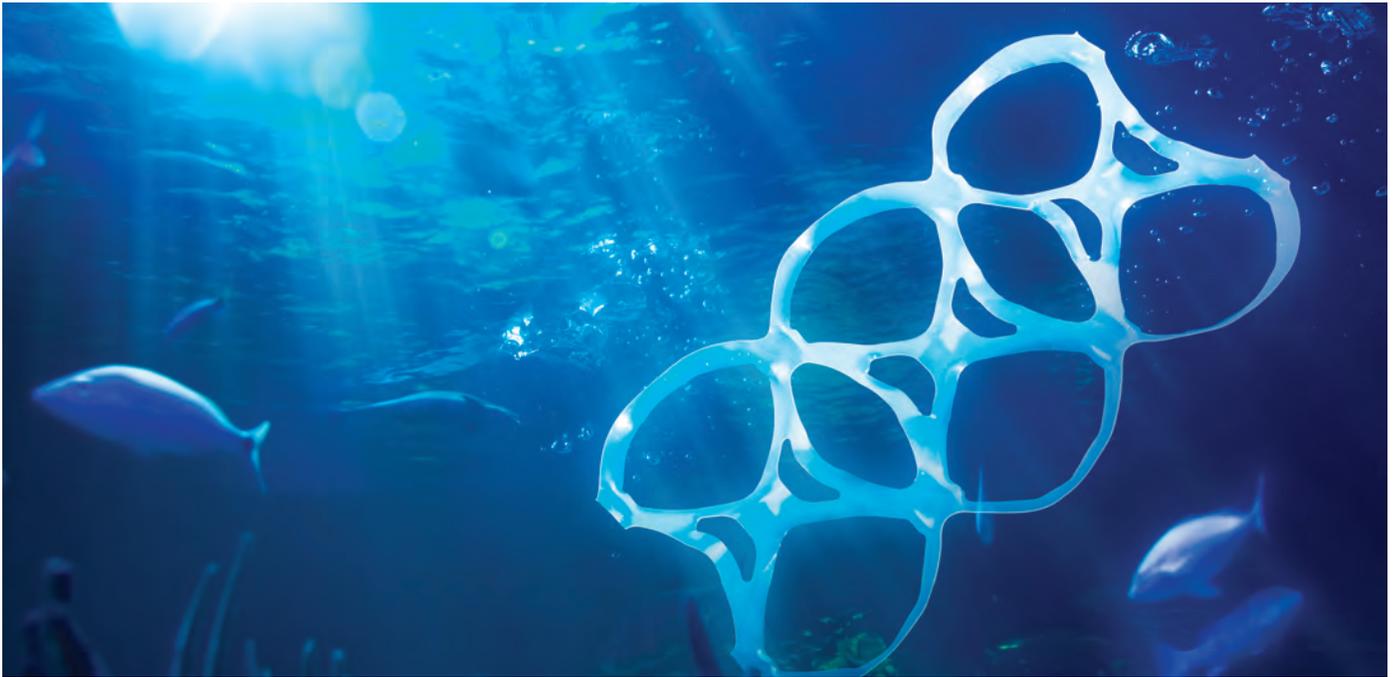
Sharks take a long time to mature and reproduce, and human impacts kill about 100 million sharks every year, so it's necessary to conserve and protect them! That's why we're proud to connect you with sharks that serve as ambassadors for their species.

This summer, we plan to introduce new sand tiger sharks to the Great Ocean Tank. These sharks can be identified by their rows of protruding teeth, even when their mouths are considered shut. They are found in temperate waters and frequently search for prey off our coastline. They are also the only shark known to surface and swallow air, storing it in their stomachs to remain neutrally buoyant when hunting for prey.

To further protect sharks and learn more about their genetic diversity and health, we participate in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Species Survival Plan for sand tiger sharks. This species has a very low reproduction rate compared to others, which makes it difficult to manage their populations. In collaboration with staff from Marineland and Georgia Aquarium, our biologists participate in breeding workshops and assist with reproductive health exams on sand tiger sharks. These efforts offer us valuable insight into the sharks' reproductive abilities that will hopefully help sustain wild populations.



The Plastic Impact



It's become a normal part of life – our children's lunchboxes contain Ziploc bags filled with snacks. Plastic water bottles are packed in the beach cooler. Waiting on the coffee shop counter are our morning drinks in plastic cups. Our car trunks hold plastic bags filled with groceries. Servers drop off our drinks with plastic straws to sip from. Single-use plastic, designed to be used once before being discarded or recycled, is a large part of the plastic pollution problem. In a typical daily routine, we may not realize the amount of single-use plastic we rely on. We're creatures of habit, but by constantly utilizing these seemingly harmless conveniences, we're causing damage to the water, wildlife and wild places surrounding us.

Currently, 300 million tons of new plastic are produced annually, but less than 10 percent of it is actually recycled. Plastic that isn't recycled takes up space in landfills or worse, escapes into the environment from trash sites and garbage trucks, collecting along roadways, sidewalks and parks. The debris is taken by wind and rain to the nearest waterway, often traveling through storm drains, and most of it will eventually make its way to the ocean where it can be deadly to marine life. According to the Litter-free Digital Journal, a citizen science project of the South Carolina Aquarium, more than 116,000 pieces of discarded plastic have been found throughout South Carolina since 2016 – and that's just what citizen scientists have spotted and collected. Plastic that remains in the environment still poses a threat to many species.

Through the eyes of sea turtles, plastic can resemble tasty treats. A plastic bag floating in the water looks oddly similar to a jellyfish, which loggerheads and leatherbacks are quick to consume. This ingested plastic can form an impaction in their intestines, hindering their chances at survival if left untreated. In just the past three years, the Sea Turtle Care Center™ has admitted 15 sea turtles with injuries caused by plastic. However, sea turtles aren't the only species affected – animals of all shapes and sizes, from plankton to whales, have accidentally mistaken plastic for food or have become entangled in it by accident. Plus, as it breaks down and becomes microplastic in the ocean, it enters our food chain and can harm you and me.





It is estimated that by 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish.

With plastic pollution quickly inundating our beloved landscapes and animals, we want to reduce and eliminate as much single-use plastic as we can. We can turn the tides on the plastic pollution crisis. Imagine if you replaced two Ziploc bags from your child's school lunch each day with a stainless steel or LunchSkins container – you could save as many as 360 bags from making their way into the ocean. Now, imagine if every Aquarium member household made that shift – we could potentially keep over two million plastic bags out of the ocean! Just one small change can, and will, make an impact.

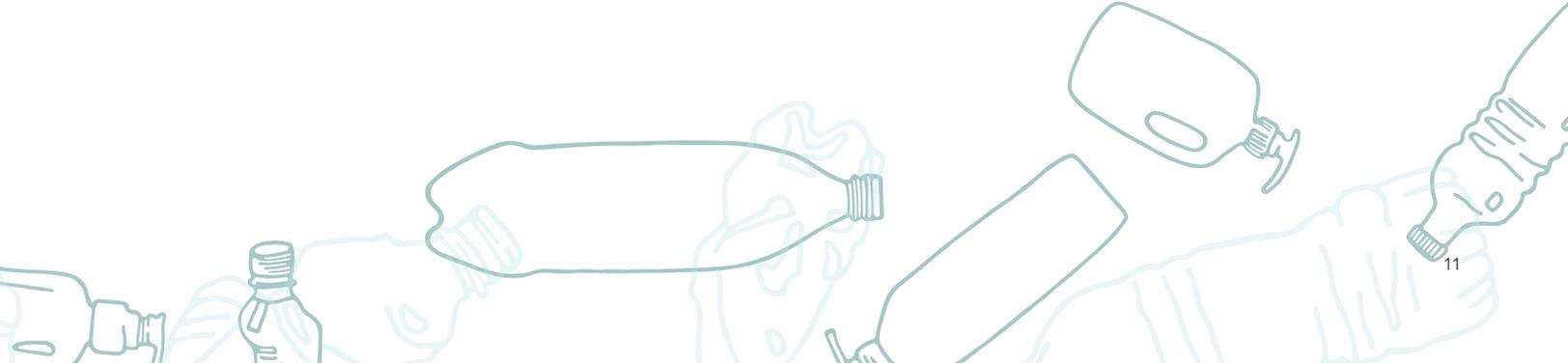
Thanks to a significant sponsorship given to the Aquarium by Ingevity, your family can now participate in finding solutions to plastic pollution at the Respond Gallery. Located on the main floor of the Aquarium and accessible to all of our guests, the Respond Gallery is comprised of interactive digital elements, original art, and a collection of plastics removed from sea turtles that will help inform you about the harmful effects of single-use plastic and offer alternatives to use in your daily life.



This summer, we encourage you to commit to our "In Our Hands" Plastic Challenge and work towards changing your habits to reduce single-use plastic. By signing up via email or following us on social media, you'll receive weekly content and prompts to determine your plastic usage. Tips and tools will help you choose alternatives that work best for your family.

Sign up for the Plastic Challenge at scaquarium.org/plasticchallenge.

Together, the solution is in our hands!



Hatchlings on the Way!



The month of May marked the start of another sea turtle nesting season. Through September, female loggerheads come ashore to deposit approximately 120 eggs into nests. Sixty days later, starting in July through the end of October, those baby sea turtles, called hatchlings, make their nocturnal trek across the sand, where the ocean waves await them. During this time, the hatchlings are extremely vulnerable – not just to predators, but also to man-made threats.

Hatchlings use the celestial light reflecting off the water to navigate

toward the ocean. For this reason, hatchlings can become disoriented and distracted by artificial light, such as streetlights, porch lights, pool lights and even flashlights. This artificial light can lead them away from the ocean into dangerous territory.

Artificial light isn't their only man-made obstacle. Structures like sandcastles and holes in the sand can disorient or trap the hatchlings. Additionally, beach debris, such as trash, can interfere with their trek across the beach.



The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) recommends the following steps to help protect threatened and endangered sea turtle nests and help hatchlings make it to the ocean safely.

- Never disturb a sea turtle crawling to or from the ocean.
- Once a sea turtle has begun nesting, observe her only from a distance.
- Do not shine lights on a sea turtle or take flash photography.
- Turn out all lights visible from the beach, dusk to dawn, from May to October.
- Turn off all outdoor and deck lighting to reduce disorientation for nesting adults and hatchlings.
- Close blinds and drapes on windows that face the beach or ocean.
- Knock down sand structures, such as sandcastles.
- Fill in holes on the beach at the end of each day, as adults and hatchlings can become trapped.
- Do not leave beach chairs, tents, or other accessories on the beach overnight.
- Never attempt to ride a sea turtle.

Lastly, be sure to call SCDNR Sea Turtle Hotline at (800) 922-5431 if you find a sick, injured or dead sea turtle.

An Internal View of the Sea Turtles

Transporting a sick sea turtle offsite for a CT scan can be stressful for staff and animal alike. Now, our veterinary staff can administer CT scans anytime at the Aquarium.

A crucial aspect of animal care, our new CT scanner provides superior diagnostic images, helping our veterinary staff view not only a turtle's skeleton, but also its internal organs, to diagnose conditions in the lungs or intestines.



This is a CT image of Kathy, a loggerhead that stranded in North Myrtle Beach. An external exam revealed that she had a healed boat strike wound, but a CT scan helped our vet understand what was happening inside. The image showed that Kathy had a fractured vertebra, but her spine was not severely damaged. However, the spinal injury may have affected her ability to use her rear flippers. Our team is now providing therapy to help her with this issue.



Tonks was found floating after going through a hopper dredge. Upon admission, staff immediately CT scanned her to make sure her lungs were undamaged. Though her lungs looked good, the scan revealed gas emboli in the kidneys, indicating that Tonks had decompression sickness. Decompression sickness happens when an animal ascends too quickly for its body to adapt to the pressure change. Since Tonks went through a dredge, she could have been pulled up 50 feet in a matter of seconds! Our vet rushed to make a pressurized oxygen chamber to assist Tonks in getting rid of some of those gas pockets, and now she's doing much better.

Thank You!

Before we obtained our own CT scanner, we took our sea turtle patients to Charleston Veterinary Referral Center for CT scans.

We thank the team at Charleston Veterinary Referral Center for supporting the Aquarium and helping save the lives of many sea turtles!

sea turtle



guardian
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