WHALE SHARKS
The gentle giants of the sea

A "BITE" ABOUT ME
- My "fancy" scientific name is *Rhincodon typus*.
- I can grow up to 20 metres - much bigger than a great white shark or even a Megalodon - Jaws has nothing on me!
- I am a **shark**, not a whale.

SWEET SHARKS
These oversized sea puppies consume a diet of **plankton** and **small fish...**

Even if one accidentally caught you they wouldn’t eat you and would let you go!

ANATOMY
Whale sharks have:
- A **fusiform body**, this means it is widest in the middle and smaller at the ends.
- A massive **dorsal fin** - that’s the one on the top.
- A broad, flattened head and great big mouth.
- Small eyes on either side of its head.
- A light underbelly - this is called **countershading** and hides it from PREDATORS.
- Filters in their mouths - they eat by swimming with their mouths WIDE OPEN like a big food sieve.
- Electro-sensors! These help whale sharks to detect their environment.

CONSERVATION OPTIMISM
Each whale shark has a unique spot pattern - like a fingerprint!

TOP SECRET
Whale sharks are a **CRYPTIC SPECIES**!
They travel all over the world making them tough to track, and when they die we can’t study them as they sink to the bottom of the ocean, **never to be seen again**...
Humans create **THREATS** to whale sharks. We need to fix these to keep them safe in our seas!

**Overfishing**

To make shark tofu and even shark fin soup!

**Bycatch**

Fisheries don’t always catch what they expect... Sometimes hooks and nets snag a whale shark!

**FOOD**

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

Greenhouse gases are warming our oceans which changes where whale sharks find their food.

**CRASHES AT SEA**

Ships can hurt whale sharks if they bump into them.

**PLASTIC POLLUTION**

When eating, whale sharks chomp anything that gets in their mouths. This means whale sharks have to be careful not to eat junk food... literally!
**LETS SAVE THESE SHARKS**

**HELP WANTED**

**SHARK-SPOTTERS**
You could help scientists to know where whale sharks are travelling, if they are breeding and if they are hurt!

**SPOT**
A whale shark swimming in the sea.

**SNAP**
A pic - make sure to get its spots in, that way scientists know who you’ve found!

**SHARE**
Your pictures online, be sure to TAG conservation optimism so we know about it.

**WHERE CAN YOU SPOT THEM??**

These jetsetters can be found in tropical and warm temperate waters.

Where to spot them:
Ningaloo Reef (Australia)
Baja California and the Yucatan in Mexico, Indonesia, Philippines, Djibouti AND MORE

Whale sharks are known to move 10,000 km a year!

**GREAT pic :)!**

**SUSTAINABLE CATCH**

**GOOD NEWS!**

Whale sharks are now one of the best-known and well-protected of all shark species.

There is still LOTS to do, but this is a positive position to be in!

**OCEAN UMBRELLA**
Whale sharks are an umbrella species. This means that conserving whale sharks helps many other species in the ocean - they keep the ecosystem safe and working properly, like an umbrella sheltering others!

**PROTECTION:**

LOADS of countries have implemented whale-shark protection...

...Most have BANNED any commercial fishing of sharks creating a ‘shark sanctuary’

By checking where the fish you buy come from and how it’s been caught, you can support fisheries that are kind to animals, people and the environment.

**Parents are a big help here!**

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**Ocean Umbrella**
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**Parents are a big help here!**
Don't be afraid to get creative with colours and shapes!

CREATE YOUR OWN SPOT PATTERN!

Every whale shark has a UNIQUE PATTERN on its back. This makes it STAND OUT from all other sharks.

YOUR TASK:
YOU are the next whale shark to make a splash in the ocean, Design a personal pattern that shows just who you are!
An umbrella species...
- A: Has a big flat head
- B: Creates a shelter for other fish
- C: Keeps their ecosystem happy and healthy

How far do whale sharks move in a year?
- A: 60,000 km
- B: 50 km
- C: 10,000 km

Where are most whale sharks found?
- A: In tropical and temperate waters
- B: Near the Poles
- C: Everywhere all of the time

How can I help whale sharks?
- A: Check where your fish came from and how it was caught
- B: Stop rubbish getting into the sea
- C: Sharing photos with Conservation Optimism
Wow good navigating! You've got Destiny all the way to Baja Bay ... time for a holiday!

Here comes the sun, we've made it to Australia! Time for a swim at Ningaloo reef or the famous Bondi Beach

You've taken the long way round and found Christmas Island ... Ho Ho Ho!

Looks like Destiny's still stuck at sea - read through again and give it another go!