

Whale Shark *Rhincodon typus*

1. Animal Type: Fish
2. Conservation Status: IUCN status as indeterminate; considered vulnerable species, due to slow growth, late maturation, extended longevity. Targeted by commercial fisheries in Asia.
 - a. Range/Habitat
 - i. Warm waters of the world.
3. Size:
 - a. Female and male: 12.65m (41.5ft) in length; 36 tonnes (79,366.4 lb)
4. Social Structure
 - a. They are solitary; Groups of whale sharks have seen rarely.
5. Reproduction
 - a. Time of year- unknown
 - b. Number of young – up to 300 pups
 - c. Rearing / Mothering – unknown
 - d. Special exhibit needs – distinguished swimming pattern to help design the pool.
6. Behavior
 - a. Nocturnal vs. Diurnal: Neither.
 - b. Shy vs. Curious: Curious especially around human
 - c. Water speed: average speed of 5kilometers per hour (3.1 mph)
 - d. Unique Behaviors: easily trainable in the captivity; Does not pose danger to human.
7. Captivity
 - a. Rarely Seen in Captivity
 - b. Osaka Aquarium Kaiyukan:
 - i. 1,426,528 gallons.
 - ii. Opened in May of 1990 – Whale sharks opened in September 2007
 - iii. 2 animals total. One was released when the new one was brought in.
 - iv. Designed by Peter Chermayeff LLC under Cambridge Seven Associates
 - c. Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium in Japan
 - i. 7500 cubic feet (1,980,000 gal)
 - ii. Opened November 1, 2002
 - iii. As of 2005, 3 whale sharks were in captivity.
 - iv. Three remaining whale sharks are there now, with the most recent transport time of March 2011
 - v. Designed by Yukifusa Kokuba
 - d. IoWorld Aquarium in Kagoshima, Japan
 - i. Smaller Aquarium
 - ii. Currently have one whale shark
 - e. National Museum of Biology and Aquarium, Taiwan
 - i. Largest tank is 6,976 gallons
 - ii. Opened in February 25, 2000
 - iii. 1 whale shark
 - iv. Engineered by Syska Hennessy Group
 - v. Designed by EHDD Architecture
 - f. Georgia Aquarium, USA
 - i. 6.3 million gallon tank
 - ii. Opened in November 2005
 - iii. 4 whale sharks
 - iv. Designed by PGAV
 - g. Video about research on whale sharks occurring at Georgia Aquarium:
 - i. <http://dsc.discovery.com/videos/sharks-at-georgia-aquarium-whale-shark-research.html>

8. Recommended or Required Husbandry Guidelines:

- a. Recommended Pool Size
 - i. 25,000 square feet (2300 square meters)
 - ii. 670,000 cubic feet (19,000 cubic meters) / Approximately 5 million gallons
 - iii. Recommended depth greater than or equal to 7m
 - 1. Minimum depth 3 m
- b. Minimum pool size
 - i. 265,000 cubic feet (7500 cubic meters)
- c. Average water temp
 - i. 75.2 degrees Fahrenheit (24 c)
- d. Holding Pool
 - i. Minimum size 46,000 cubic feet (1350 cubic meters) / Approximately 345,000 gallons
 - ii. Minimum depth of 3 meters

9. Enrichment

- a. Whale sharks are enriched by interaction with aquarists and public swim interactions.
- b. Whale sharks can be trained for specific feeding regimen, and may be able to be trained for enrichment.

10. Fun Facts:

- a. These gentle giants allow humans to hold on for 'rides' sometimes in the wild.
- b. Whale sharks are not whales, they are fish.
- c. Whale sharks eat plankton via filter feeding.

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