

Spot the difference

CALLING ALL DIVE CENTERS & DIVERS

WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!

JOIN US AND TURN YOUR DIVES INTO RESEARCH DATA IN AID OF WHALE SHARK RESEARCH!

Foto I.D. Guidelines

TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS & SEND US YOUR IMAGES TO HELP BUILD A REGIONAL WHALE SHARK DATABASE...

DIVE CENTRES - REGISTER YOUR INTERESTED DIVE MASTERS & DIVE INSTRUCTORS on-line at WWW.SharkwatchArabia.com...



IMPORTANT NOTES

- Do NOT under any circumstances use flash!
- Approach slowly or wait for the shark to approach you.
- Do NOT touch the animal or get in it's way.
- Be careful NOT to get too close to the tail fin.
- Do NOT crowd the whale shark with too many people in the water at the same time.

Pictures Courtesy of Warren Baverstock / www.warrendigital.com

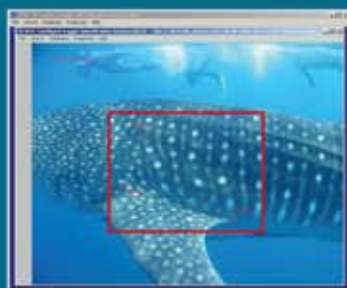
We Need You To Help Us With Whale Shark Research...

Whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*) are the largest fish in the world and an iconic species. This area is a worldwide hotspot for whale sharks, with a high year-round density of juvenile sharks between 3-10m in length, and may contain a significant population of females (largely absent from other Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean hotspots).

In order to better understand the distribution and prevalence of gender, we need recorded sightings in order to establish a regional database that can lead to determining the overall status of whale sharks in the Arabian Gulf & Arabian Sea.

Sharkwatch Arabia has established an on-line database so that all divers & snorkellers can submit their pictures & data by filling out the on-line form on www.sharkwatcharabia.com and follow the instructions on how to send images. Pictures and can be sent by email to sharkwatcharabia@gmail.com.

As a dive center operating in waters frequented by whale sharks with regularity, we urge you to please promote this initiative and play a direct role by carrying cameras on board your dive boats at all times. Participating in this project will also greatly enhance the experience of your diving customer.



Screen shot of the I3S program showing the area of digital image processing. (P. MC2)

The computer program I3S (Interactive Individual Identification System) was originally developed for matching the spot patterns of ragged tooth sharks (*Carcharias taurus*), but Conrad Speed working with Mark Meekan and Cory Wachowicz in Australia, found the system to be effective for whale sharks. This program is now used as the standard research tool for whale shark identification and has allowed population estimates to be generated for the whale sharks off Ningaloo, D'Arby and around the Seychelles.



The vital area to photograph is between the forward edge of the pectoral fin, including the last gill opening, to the back tip of the pectoral fin flap. Make sure you photograph both flanks of the shark if possible.

Whale Shark ID Tips:

- The white spots on the shark's skin are individually distinct. Each shark has a unique spot pattern, helping researchers to identify individual animals - try to take photos of both the left and right flanks to help with scientific ID software.
- Make a note of the shark's sex (male= claspers) and try to take a photograph.
- Make a note or take photographs of any unique markings or damage to fins/tail.



SHARKWATCH
ARABIA

