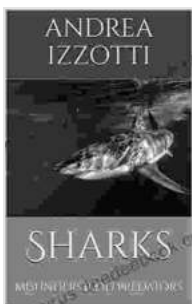


# Sharks: Misunderstood Predators Born to Be Free

Sharks, the enigmatic denizens of the deep, have long been shrouded in a veil of mystery and fear. Often depicted as relentless killing machines, these apex predators have been unjustly vilified. In reality, sharks play a vital role in maintaining the equilibrium of marine ecosystems, and many species face the threat of extinction due to human activities.

## Anatomy and Physiology

Sharks belong to the class Chondrichthyes, which includes cartilaginous fish with skeletons made of cartilage rather than bone. They have a streamlined, torpedo-shaped body that allows for efficient swimming. Their skin is covered in small, tooth-like scales called denticles, which provide protection and reduce drag.



## Sharks: misunderstood predators (Born to be free)

by Andrea Izzotti

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 21462 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Print length : 48 pages

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Sharks have a keen sense of smell and hearing. Their nostrils are located on the underside of their snout, and they use their nostrils to detect odors in the water. Sharks also have a lateral line system, which consists of a series of sensory cells along their body that can detect vibrations in the water.

Sharks have a powerful jaw with sharp teeth. The teeth are arranged in multiple rows, and they are constantly replaced as they wear down. Sharks are not particularly fast swimmers, but they can deliver a powerful burst of speed when attacking prey.

### **Behavior and Diet**

Sharks are generally solitary animals, but some species, such as the scalloped hammerhead, form large schools. Sharks are opportunistic feeders, and their diet consists of a wide variety of prey, including fish, seals, sea lions, and even other sharks. Some species, such as the whale shark, are filter feeders and feed on plankton.

Sharks have a reputation for being aggressive predators, but in reality, most species are not a threat to humans. In fact, only a few species of sharks are responsible for the majority of attacks on humans. These attacks are often provoked by human activities, such as fishing or spearfishing.

### **Importance in the Ecosystem**

Sharks play a vital role in maintaining the health of marine ecosystems. As apex predators, they help to control populations of other animals, including fish, seals, and sea lions. This helps to keep the ecosystem in balance and prevents overpopulation.

Sharks are also a source of food for other animals, including dolphins, whales, and seabirds. Their carcasses also provide nutrients for the seafloor, which helps to support the growth of new life.

## **Threats and Conservation**

Many shark species are facing the threat of extinction due to human activities. The biggest threat to sharks is overfishing. Sharks are often caught as bycatch in fishing nets, and their fins are often sold for use in shark fin soup. This has led to a decline in shark populations around the world.

Other threats to sharks include pollution, habitat loss, and climate change. Pollution can harm sharks directly, and it can also damage their habitat. Habitat loss occurs when sharks' natural habitat is destroyed or degraded, which can make it difficult for them to find food and shelter.

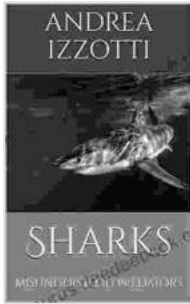
Climate change is also a threat to sharks. Rising sea temperatures can cause changes in shark distribution and behavior. Climate change can also lead to the loss of coral reefs, which are important habitat for many shark species.

Sharks are fascinating creatures that play a vital role in the health of marine ecosystems. However, many shark species are facing the threat of extinction due to human activities. It is important to protect sharks and their habitat so that these amazing creatures can continue to thrive in our oceans.

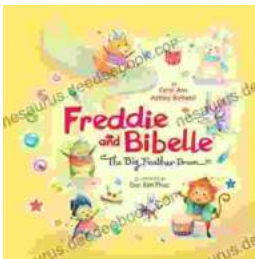
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