

Sharks vs People

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FROM: Ruth A. Musgrave
TO: Virtual Team Members
SUBJECT: How do you hide a shark?

Hi Team Shark,

Sharks are beautiful creatures. Unlike some animals, a shark's beauty isn't designed to stand out or be noticed. Monarch butterflies, lionfish, and poison dart frogs are examples of animals that want to be noticed. Their stunning looks warn that they are dangerous and best left alone.

A shark's coloration is designed to make sure it does not stand out. A shark's coloration helps it disappear in its home. Sharks need to hide from animals they are hunting and from animals that hunt sharks.

Many of the 500-plus kinds of sharks are various shades of gray. However, sharks can also be blue, bronze, yellow, tan, brown, black, reddish, and olive green. The goblin shark is pink with bluish fins!

Many sharks have darker backs and are white or lighter on the underside (ventral) of the body. This type of camouflage helps them disappear when viewed from above or below the shark. The shark's darker back blends into the darker ocean. The lighter belly or underside blends into the light at the surface.

Many sharks have spots, dots, stripes, or dapples. Some have spots and stripes. These patterns help break up the body shape making it harder to see the shark. The shark disappears in shadows or light filtering unevenly through the water.

Wait, there's more! Carpet sharks can change color to blend in even better with the rocks or sand on the ocean floor. Wobbegong sharks look like rocks, sand, and a bit of seaweed.

There's even more! At least 40 to 50 sharks glow in the dark (bioluminescence), like the lantern shark. Many sharks use this light as a form of camouflage. Amazing!

The next time you look at a shark, remember to admire its subtle beautiful coloration.

Ruth

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