

# Sharks vs People

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FROM: Ruth A. Musgrave  
TO: Virtual Team Members  
SUBJECT: Playing tag with sharks

Hi Team Shark,

Studying sharks, or any ocean animal, is challenging. Do you have any guesses why it might be hard to study sharks?

You'd be right if you said things like:

- Sharks swim fast
- Sharks travel long distances
- The ocean is dark
- They live deep in the sea
- We would scare the sharks
- (In some cases) it might not be safe to get close
- Unlike land animals that return daily to watering holes or cross paths, you cannot put a camera in one place to catch a glimpse of sharks

Those are just some reasons. Yet is essential we know more about where sharks go, what they do, how they interact with each other, and more.

One way scientists gather information is with tracking tags. The tags are often attached to a shark's dorsal fin. The tag is like a tiny computer. It collects data as the shark travels. It collects information such as:

- where the shark swims
- how far it travels
- how deep it dives
- how often it dives
- the water temperature and salinity (how much salt is in the water)

Tags are designed to fall off or let go after a certain amount of time. They float to the surface and

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*Playing tag with sharks* CONTINUED

send the information to a satellite that then sends it to the scientist's computer. Some tags can send data if the shark swims close to the surface.

By tagging sharks, scientists learn where sharks travel, how deep they dive, the temperature of the water, and other facts that helps us understand them. The more we understand a shark species, the better we can protect it.

By tagging sharks, we've learned that whale sharks and many others travel thousands of miles every year. They travel around the world, cross the Equator, and more. Populations one country hunts are the same animals that other countries hunt across an ocean. This is important because it means the same sharks are hunt throughout the world, rather than different groups.

While tagging sharks is an excellent way to gather information, there are challenges and limitations, too. Can you think of any?

Tagging is just one way we're learning more about sharks in an effort to save them. I guess you could say that scientists are playing tag with sharks and everyone wins!

*Ruth*

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