

Sharks vs People

www.whaletimes.org

SEAMAIL™

FROM: Ruth A. Musgrave
TO: Virtual Team Members
SUBJECT: The big tale of the tiny scale

Hi Team Shark,

Some of the tiniest parts of a shark might be the most amazing. Their scales. Like other fish, a shark's skin is covered in scales.

The scales overlap on the skin, like shingles on a roof. If you were to pet a shark (something we don't recommend), the scales feel smooth if you move your hand from head to tail. However, if you were to move your hand from the tail toward the head, you'd find the skin feels like sand paper. That's because you'd feel each scale. The overlapping pattern of the scales helps reduce drag -- helps them cut through the water more easily.

Shark scales are made of the same material as teeth. In fact, they are basically tiny teeth covering the body. They don't use them to eat, of course. The scales create a tough suit of armor that protects the skin and body.

Unlike other fish, sharks' scales are temporary. They lose and regrow them their entire lives. Bony fish's scales grow throughout their lives. (Sharks' teeth are also temporary. They constantly lose and regrow those, too.)

In order to survive, sharks must be fast and their maneuverability top notch. When you think shark scales, think fast airplanes. The scales of a shark act like the flaps on an air...no wait. The flaps on an airplane act like the scales on a shark. (Sharks came first!) The scales move up and down, similar to airplane flaps to help with sharp or quick turns. This helps them with their maneuverability. Of course, one is swimming and one is flying. Oh, and one is a shark and the other a machine.

Roof shingles, teeth, airplane flaps, who knew there was such a tale to the tiny scale.

Ruth

Ruth A. Musgrave
Team Shark and Ocean Explorer
WhaleTimes.org



©2018 WhaleTimes, Inc. All Rights Reserved