



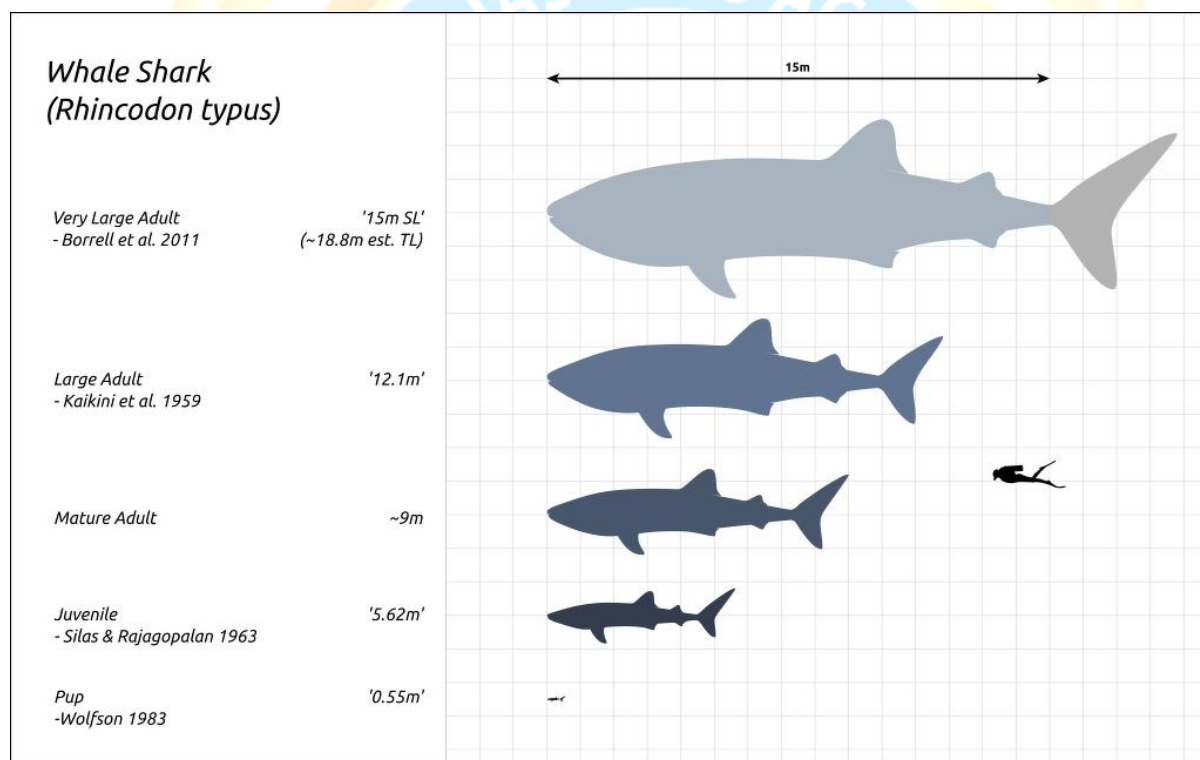
SPECIES OF THE DAY: WHALE SHARKS

About: The Whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) is the world's largest known fish species. It is not a whale but a species of shark.

Protections:

- **Wildlife Protection Act of India, 1972:** Schedule I, which renders the capture and killing of the fish a cognisable offence.
- **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) status:** endangered
- **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species:** Appendix II
- **Threats:**

Whale sharks have been hunted for years for its fin and liver for commercial trade, oil from the fish was used for water-proofing wooden boats.



- **Habitat:** Found in all the tropical oceans of the world, whale sharks have white spotted colouration which make these gentle giants easy to distinguish. They are popular with snorkelers and divers at sites where they aggregate off the coast.
- **Importance:** The presence of whale sharks indicates the availability of plankton and the overall health of the oceans.
- **Size:** While not exactly known, the maximum size of a whale shark could be as large as 20 metres.



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- **India:** Gujarat has the maximum density of whale shark population in the Indo-pacific region.



**P.L. RAJ IAS & IPS ACADEMY | 1447/C, 3rd floor, 15th Main Road,
Anna Nagar West, Chennai-40. Ph.No.044-42323192, 9445032221
Email: plrajmemorial@gmail.com Website: www.plrajiacademy.com
Telegram link: <https://t.me/plrajiacademy> YouTube: P L RAJ IAS & IPS ACADEMY**