



EPAULETTE SHARK

Hemiscyllium ocellatum

A small and slender shark, that walks! While capable of swimming, the Epauulette Shark seems to prefer 'walking'. Using their muscular pectoral fins they can often be seen 'strolling' between rock pools in search of food.

Sandy-brown in colour with a pattern of dark spots, these sharks are well camouflaged. They also have two large black spots surrounded by a white ring, resembling large eyes.

Eyespots (or ocellus) appear in many species - including butterflies, birds, reptiles, and other fish. It's thought that they make the animal appear bigger and so more intimidating to predators. They may also help deflect attacks away from vital parts of their body.

This little shark is most active at low-tide and at night, particularly at dusk and dawn.

Often they can be found - barely submerged - in the warm shallow oxygen-depleted waters of rock-pools. These become severely hypoxic at night. Yet, remarkably, Epaulette's can survive here for long periods of time by increasing blood supply to their brain and shutting down

FAST FACTS

SIZE:

Matures at:

♀ 55-64cm | ♂ 55-62cm

Max: 107cm

DIET:

Worms, crabs, shrimp & small fish.

RANGE:

Northern Australia & New Guinea.

HABITAT:

Warm shallow waters with coral reefs. Often found in waters 15cm deep but may venture to at least 40m.

STATUS:

Least Concern

non-essential brain functions.

Epaulette's reproduce by laying eggs, at night, among the coral. From August-January females will lay one pair of eggs every 14 days, producing 20 eggs a year.

Pup's hatch after ~115-130 days and are born ~14-16cm. They reach sexual maturity around 7 years.

EPAULETTE SHARK THREATS

In Australia, Epaulette Sharks are abundant and face no major threats. A small number are taken for display in aquariums or caught as bycatch in fisheries.

But, in New Guinea, they are more vulnerable to human threats:

- **FISHERIES** – Overfishing and destructive fishing practices are likely to be threatening this population.
- **HABITAT DETRUCTION** – Dynamite fishing and pollution is damaging coral reefs.

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3 WAYS TO HELP SHARKS

1. Sign up to our newsletter - keep up to date with all the latest news and campaign updates.
2. If you see a shark, record your sighting on our Sightings Database.
3. Join us in safeguarding the future of sharks by becoming a Shark Trust member.

Safeguarding the future of sharks - www.sharktrust.org