



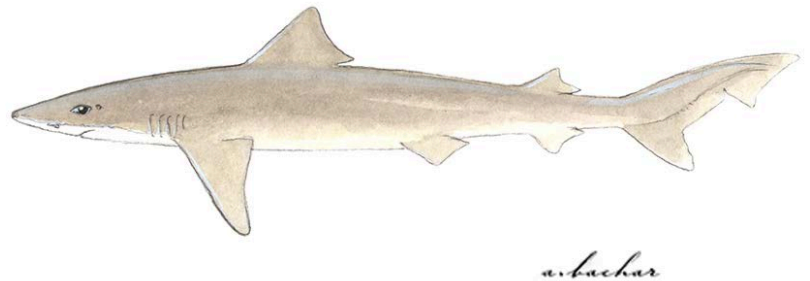
SHARK STEWARDS

RESTORING OCEAN HEALTH BY SAVING SHARKS

SOUPFIN SHARK

(*Galeorhinus galeus*)

Order – Carcharhiniformes
Family – Triakidae
Genus – *Galeorhinus*
Species – *galeus*



These are a pelagic species of houndshark found in temperate sharks globally. They are a schooling species found in offshore waters but are also known to frequent bays and nearshore. Easily targeted in commercial fisheries, this shark is endangered globally. Also called School or Tope sharks.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND HABITAT

The range is global in temperate and tropical oceans, from latitudes of 68°N to 55°S. In the western Atlantic Ocean, its range is limited from southern Brazil to Argentina while in the eastern Atlantic it can be found from Iceland to South Africa, including the Mediterranean Sea. In the western Indian Ocean region, the school shark is in waters off South Africa. Distribution In the southwestern Pacific Ocean occurs in waters off Australia and New Zealand. in the Eastern Pacific Ocean this shark is common in waters from British Columbia, Canada, south to Baja California (U.S.) and the Gulf of California in Mexico as well as waters off Peru and Chile.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

1. Grey/ Bronze, fading to pale on the shark's underside.
2. Triangular fins, with an elegant tapered body.

BIOLOGY

→ Distinctive Features

Also known as the Tope or School Shark, the body is tapered with large eyes and mouth in a pointed snout, triangular fins, and a strong, asymmetrical tabbed caudal (tail) fin. Common in large schools, they can grow over 6 feet in length and 100 pounds, and can travel over 35 miles/ day.

→ Coloration

A dusky coloration on the top (dorsal) side of the shark and a pale underside. Known as countershading, this makes it difficult for predators to detect the shark.

FUN FACT

Recent research shows that West Coast Female Soupfin sharks migrate south to the La Jolla every three years to gestate and pup.

→ Size and Age

Males mature between 1.35 and 1.52 meters (53 to 60 inches) and grow to a maximum size of 1.78 meters. Females mature at about 61 centimeters and grow to a maximum size of 1.96 meters. Males mature in eight to nine years and females in about 11 years. Pups are born during the spring at a size of between 30.5 and 40.6 centimeters (12 and 16 inches).

The CA Department of Fish and Wildlife **note** that the maximum lifespan for these sharks is 55 years.

→ Food Habits

Soupfin sharks forage on a variety of bony fish species, although larger individuals prefer cartilaginous fishes, like other sharks. Invertebrate prey includes squid, crabs, shrimp, and lobster. Young sharks tend to feed more heavily on invertebrates than do adults.

→ Reproduction

Soupfin sharks are ovoviviparous, carrying fertilized eggs internally and releasing live young, with litters of between 6 and 52 pups, the average being 35. The litter size increases in proportion to the female's size.

→ Predators

In California, predators include sea lions, larger sharks, such as sevengill sharks, white sharks and shortfin mako.

FUN FACT

Soupfin sharks were given the name for their fins for shark fin soup by immigrant Chinese fishermen brought to the San Francisco Bay in the mid 19th century.

DANGER TO HUMANS

Generally a docile and shy species, the International Shark Attack File, documents one confirmed unprovoked attack by Soupfin sharks.

CONSERVATION

The soupfin shark is among the most heavily fished sharks in the world, and coveted for the shark fin trade. The soupfin **nearly fished out** in California during the 1930s. These sharks are frequently killed as accidental bycatch in gill nets and tuna longlines. Populations of this shark has declined by 88% globally in the past 80 years. The IUCN lists soupfin sharks as Critically Endangered and a petition has been filed with the National Marine Fisheries under the Endangered Species act. **In 2025 these sharks were listed under CITES Appendix II.**