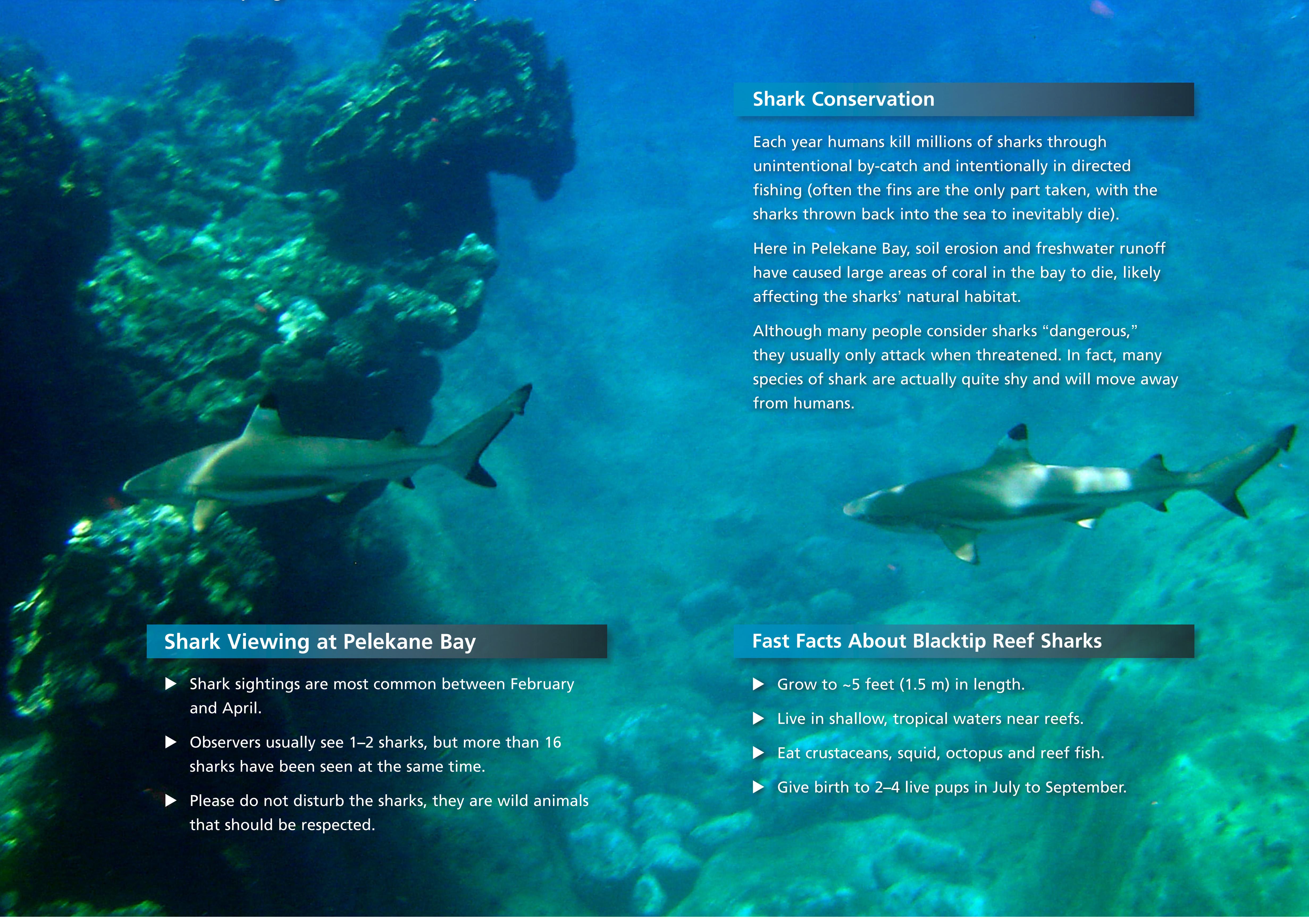




Blacktip Reef Sharks of Pelekane Bay

If you look closely out at the water, you may see small, black, gray and white triangles moving through the water. These are the dorsal fins of blacktip reef sharks which are commonly sighted in Pelekane Bay.



Shark Viewing at Pelekane Bay

- ▶ Shark sightings are most common between February and April.
- ▶ Observers usually see 1–2 sharks, but more than 16 sharks have been seen at the same time.
- ▶ Please do not disturb the sharks, they are wild animals that should be respected.

Fast Facts About Blacktip Reef Sharks

- ▶ Grow to ~5 feet (1.5 m) in length.
- ▶ Live in shallow, tropical waters near reefs.
- ▶ Eat crustaceans, squid, octopus and reef fish.
- ▶ Give birth to 2–4 live pups in July to September.

The Hawaiian name is *manō pā'ele*, which means “black-smudged shark.” The Latin scientific name is *Carcharhinus melanopterus*.

Shark Conservation

Each year humans kill millions of sharks through unintentional by-catch and intentionally in directed fishing (often the fins are the only part taken, with the sharks thrown back into the sea to inevitably die).

Here in Pelekane Bay, soil erosion and freshwater runoff have caused large areas of coral in the bay to die, likely affecting the sharks’ natural habitat.

Although many people consider sharks “dangerous,” they usually only attack when threatened. In fact, many species of shark are actually quite shy and will move away from humans.

Cultural Importance of Sharks

The shark (*manō* in Hawaiian) is an important figure in Hawaiian culture, religion and oral history. *Manō* are one of the animals in which an ancestral guardian spirit ('aumakua) might manifest itself. The remains of *Hale o Kapuni Heiau*, a sacred temple (*heiau*) dedicated to the sharks, are submerged in the waters of Pelekane Bay.

Identifying Individual Animals

Researchers studying various species of animals use “photo-identification” of natural markings to recognize individuals for the purpose of counting them and learning about their behavior and life history. Using this method, researchers have identified 13 different blacktip reef sharks in Pelekane Bay to determine when and how often they are sighted.



Hawaiian spinner dolphin



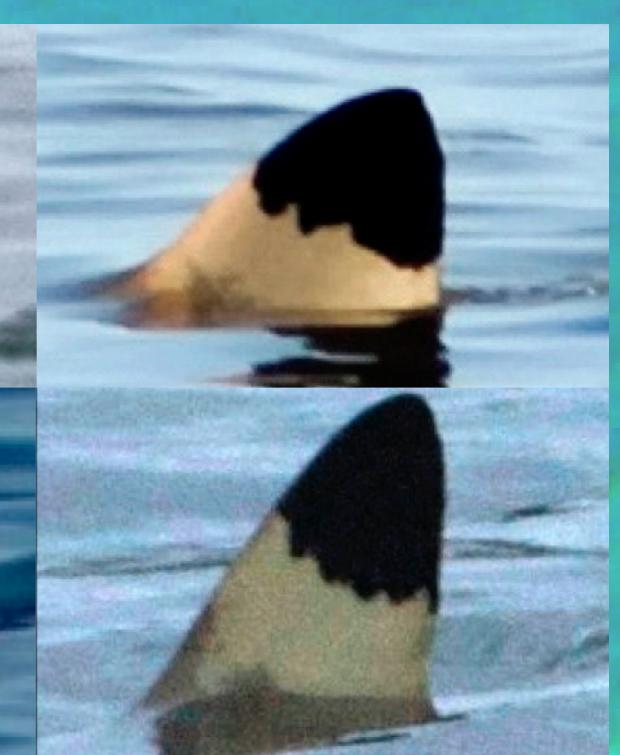
Blacktip reef shark



Humpback whale

Which Sharks Are The Same?

These are photos of the dorsal fins of four different Pelekane Bay sharks. Can you tell which sharks are the same? Look closely at the black pattern where it borders the white.



Sign production and images courtesy of the Hawai'i Marine Mammal Consortium www.hmmc.org

