



WILD CLASSROOM

## Conservation in the Classroom

*Whale Sharks: Protecting Mexico's Marine Giants*

October 20, 2022

12:30 pm ET / 9:30 am PT

Recommended grade levels: 2–6

Watch live on [Conservation in the Classroom](#)

View recording on the [Wild Classroom YouTube channel](#)



**Dr. Francesca Pancaldi**  
Shark Conservation Officer  
WWF Mexico

In the bay of a small town located in Baja California Sur, the largest fish on the planet arrives. Not one but many! Join Dr. Francesca Pancaldi—scientist, ecotourism guide, and shark conservation officer—to learn all about the magnificent whale shark! Dr. Pancaldi will share the conservation efforts she and her team have implemented to protect whale sharks in Mexico, as well as how you can do your part to care for these incredible animals.



## BELL RINGER WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Help prepare your learners by introducing the topic with these warm-up questions.

### Consider

Similar to human fingerprints, patterns of spots are unique to each whale shark. How do you think this helps scientists study them?



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### Explain

Are whale sharks whales? Or sharks? Explain, using examples of their features that classify them as one or the other.

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### Reflect

Whale sharks are becoming more and more popular with tourists; people around the world travel to see them swimming in the wild. How do you think tourism could both help and harm whale sharks?

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Planning to watch the event live? Write your question(s) for the presenter here:

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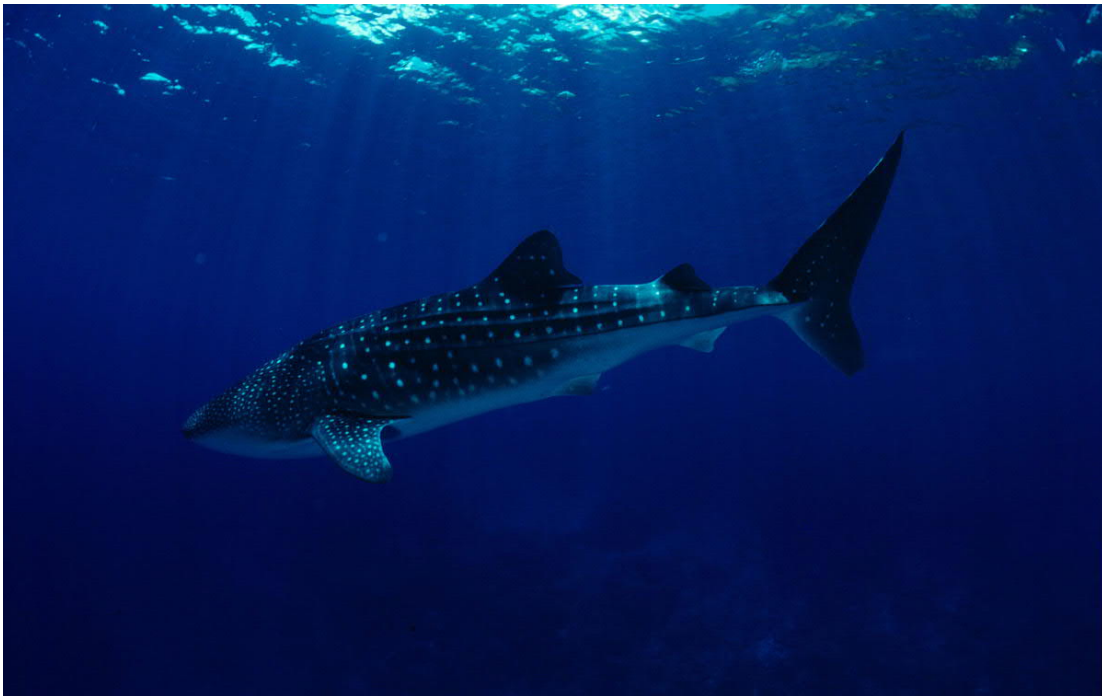
## ***INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES***

Use these web articles and videos to provide background information on whale sharks to your learners.

- Blog: [Ten Whale Shark Facts](#)
- Web story: [Five ways sharks and rays help the world](#)
- Webpage: [Whale Shark](#)
- Webpage: [How big are whale sharks? And four other whale shark facts](#)
- Webpage: [Shark Facts vs. Shark Myths](#)
- Video: [Do We Need Sharks?](#)
- Video: [10 Amazing Shark Species](#)

## ***HOW TO HELP***

- Blog: [Know Before You Go: Responsible Whale Shark Tourism in Mexico](#)
- Webpage: [7 ways you can help save the ocean](#)



## ACTIVITIES

Check out these lesson plans to supplement the content from the event.



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### [Ocean conservation activities in the Sea Turtle Toolkit](#)

Use lessons from the Sea Turtle Toolkit such as “Be Careful What You Fish For” and “A Need for the Seas” to educate your learners on the importance of protecting oceans and marine species.

Grades 3–5

### [Our Coastal Seas discussion guide](#)

The “Our Coastal Seas” episode of the Netflix series *Our Planet* uncovers the importance of shallow seas and why they are in decline. Use this discussion guide to further the conversation on topics including ecosystem interdependence and human impact.

Grades 5–12



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### [Women in Science](#)

After learning about whale sharks from Dr. Pancaldi, use the Women in Science ID cards and activity page to teach students about other WWF women scientists who are helping species, habitats, and people around the world.

Grades 3–8

## ASSESSMENTS

Conclude your lesson on whale sharks with these resources and fun assessment tools.

### [Kahoot! Oceans course](#)

- All About Sharks and Rays
- Threats to Oceans
- Importance of Oceans



### ***Whale Sharks: Protecting Mexico's Marine Giants Worksheet***

Use the worksheet on the following page as an assignment or a quiz following the viewing of the Conservation in the Classroom event.

Answer Key (questions on the next page):

- 1) c
- 2) true
- 3) filter
- 4) true
- 5) d
- 6) accidental capture in fishing nets
- 7) monitoring sharks, training tourism guides and boat captains to be safer, informing and inspiring the local communities, working with the Mexican government to protect/clean shark habitats





## Whale Sharks: Protecting Mexico's Marine Giants

Answer the following questions after learning about whale sharks.

1. Adult whale sharks are approximately the same length as
  - a. two subway cars
  - b. two football fields
  - c. two school buses
  - d. two cruise ships
2. True or false: The whale shark is the largest fish in the world.
3. Whale sharks are known as \_\_\_\_\_ feeders, since they eat by taking in large amounts of water containing plankton and small shrimp or fish and then using their gills to push the water out.
4. True or false: The whale shark is currently endangered.
5. How can the tourism industry negatively impact whale sharks?
  - a. tourists don't follow the rules during the activity
  - b. boats can get too close and collide with the sharks
  - c. increase of garbage on the beach and in the ocean
  - d. all of the above



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6. Another major threat that whale sharks face is being caught as *bycatch*. Explain what bycatch is.

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7. Name one way Francesca and her team at WWF Mexico are working to protect whale sharks.

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8. Name one thing you can do to help support whale sharks from where you live.

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