

Shark sightings and reporting

How do I find out if there has been a shark sighting?

A shark patrol service is provided by the South Australian Government with fixed winged aircraft monitoring beaches from North Haven to Rapid Bay from 9.45 am to 7.30 pm every day during the summer period – traditionally starting from December until April.

Planes also patrol beaches between Victor Harbor and Goolwa on weekends, school holidays and public holidays.

If a shark poses a risk to a member of the public, the aircraft will fly continuous orbits in the vicinity, sound a siren and advise SA Police. Surf Life Savers will also sound a siren, put up a red and white flag and advise swimmers to evacuate the water immediately. Always look out for these and obey their warnings and instructions quickly.

Surf Life Saving SA also operates helicopter patrols along Adelaide beaches that spots sharks, rips and other dangers.

You can also find out about reported shark sightings via:

- SA Police News - www.police.sa.gov.au/police-news
- Twitter - @SAPoliceNews @SurfLifeSA @WestpacHeliSA @SA_PIRSA
- PIRSA Shark sightings log - http://pir.sa.gov.au/fishing/fishwatch/sharks/shark_sightings_log

How do I report a shark sighting?

Water users are urged to report shark sightings as soon as possible.

Shark sightings, where the shark poses an immediate danger to human life, should be reported immediately to SA Police on 000.

Sightings of large sharks that do not pose a threat to human life can be reported through the SA Recreational Fishing Guide smartphone app, the 24-hour Fishwatch hotline on 1800 065 522 or online at www.pir.sa.gov.au/sharks

What information should I provide when reporting a shark?

- Location and number of sharks
- How close the shark is to the shore
- How close the shark is to swimmers or other people
- The species of the shark (if known) or a description of the shark and approximate size
- Any other details that may be relevant

Is the number of sharks increasing? Are sharks sightings near metropolitan beaches increasing?

Sharks are a natural and important part of a healthy marine ecosystem, are highly mobile and frequent all South Australian coastal and shelf waters. It is not uncommon for sharks to be sighted all year round although they tend to be more frequent in the warmer months.

PIRSA has noticed an increase in the number of shark reporting's. This could be due to many factors including people reporting the same shark or the same shark frequenting the same area over a period of time.

Increased media attention, surveillance and more people using the water have contributed to the impression that shark numbers are on the rise.

Are all sharks dangerous?

Over 160 species of sharks inhabit Australian waters, with around 30 different species of sharks frequenting South Australia. There are around five species of shark in South Australian waters that are considered potentially dangerous:

- White shark
- Thresher shark
- Mako shark
- Bronze whaler
- Dusky whaler.

While many shark species are capable of injuring humans, the majority are not aggressive under most circumstances.

How do I identify what type of shark it is?

To learn about the most common sharks encountered in South Australian waters and ways to best identify them, visit www.pir.sa.gov.au/fishing/fishwatch/sharks/identifying_sharks

What should I do if I encounter a shark?

If you encounter a shark, the most important thing is not to interact with it.

If you are in a small boat, paddle craft or swimming, please consider your immediate safety and if you have any concerns leave the area.

For swimmers, divers and surfers, don't swim where there is a possible attraction or food source for sharks, such as areas where seals, dolphins or schools of fish aggregate.

Other advice includes:

- Do not swim alone and stay close to the shore.
- Avoid the water at dawn, dusk or at night, when some species of shark are known to come inshore to feed.

- If you notice schooling fish or other wildlife start to behave erratically, leave the water.
- If a shark is sighted in the area, leave the water as quickly and calmly as possible.

The White Shark is also a protected species and it is an offence to interfere, harm or harass them.

Are there any beach enclosures in South Australia?

There are a few swimming enclosures along regional beaches in South Australia. These include:

- Wallaroo Bay
- Moonta Jetty
- Port Lincoln Jetty

Can a White Shark be killed if they attack people?

The White Shark is a protected species and it is an offence to interfere, harm or harass them.

In the case of an attack, or where there is a potential threat to life, the State Government are guided by the Shark Incident Response Plan to determine what course of action to take. This Plan involves a variety of Government Departments and Organisations who contribute to determining the most appropriate course of action to take, with destruction of the White Shark being a “last resort”.