For Alice and Will, my very own fact finders! - S.M

For Harrison, who really loves sharks! - V.B

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Published by b small publishing ltd.
www.bsmall.co.uk

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1 2 3 4 5 ISBN 978-1-913918-48-4

Publisher: Sam Hutchinson. Art director: Vicky Barker. Editorial: Sam Hutchinson.

Printed in China by WKT Co. Ltd. on paper from responsible sources.

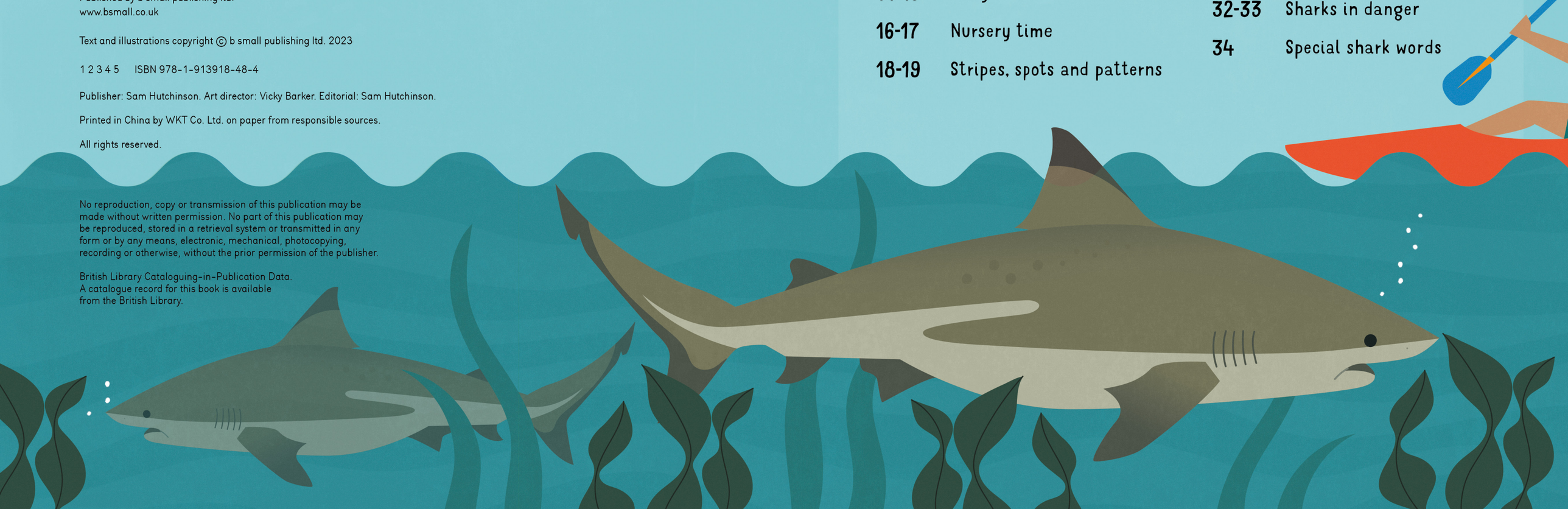
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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

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What is a shark?

Sharks are fish and they live in all the world's oceans. Their bodies are perfect for hunting and surviving in the warmest or coldest seas.

Shark skeletons are not made of bone, but of bendy, gristly stuff called **cartilage**. Our ears are made of this!

Cartilage does not weigh as much as bone. It helps a shark to float and to swim a long way without using up too much energy.

A shark's liver is big and oily. This helps the shark to float. Some sharks can survive for a year without eating. They just live off the oil stored in their liver.

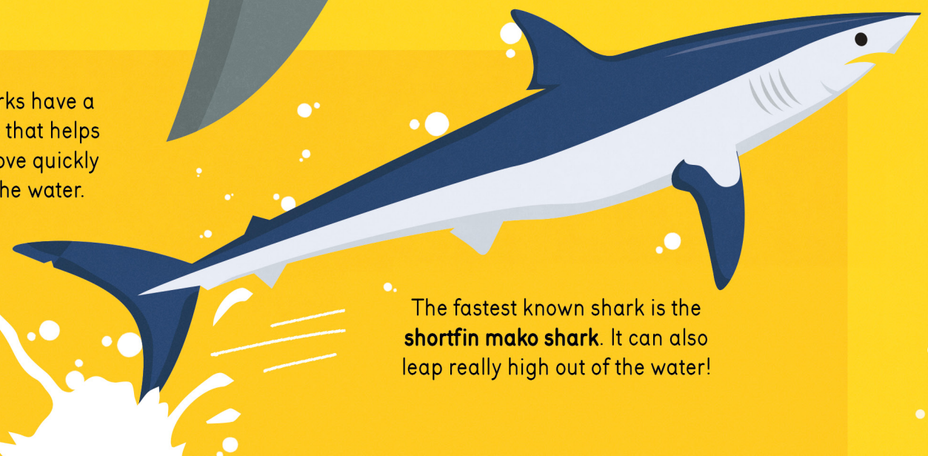
Dorsal fin

Sharks have hard, overlapping scales called **denticles.** These make shark skin pointy and rough like sandpaper.



The **bramble shark** has such spiky **denticles** that they are like thorns!

Many sharks have a slim shape that helps them to move quickly through the water.



The fastest known shark is the **shortfin mako shark**. It can also leap really high out of the water!

Pectoral fin

Most sharks have five slits on each side of their head. Under these slits are gills which help sharks to breathe.

Like humans, sharks need to breathe in a gas called **oxygen** to stay alive.

Water comes into a shark's mouth and out again through the slits. It passes over the gills which take in **oxygen** from the water.

All sorts of sharks

When we think of sharks we often imagine huge and scary creatures, but sharks come in all shapes and sizes. Some are really tiny, but others are the biggest fish on the planet!

The **whale shark** is the BIGGEST fish on Earth. It can grow as long as a bus.

The biggest whale shark seen so far measured 18 metres long.

The **great white shark** can grow up to 6 metres long. Its MASSIVE jaws can swallow a whole seal in one GULP!

The teeny **dwarf lantern shark** is so small that it can fit in the palm of a hand.

Angel sharks have beautiful fins that look just like wings.

Bullhead sharks have very blunt heads and small spines on their **dorsal** fins.

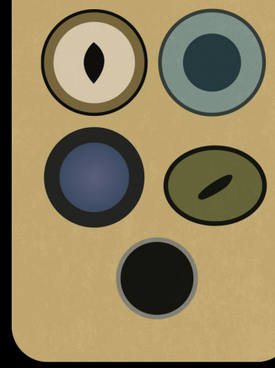
Some sharks have incredibly long tails. The **thresher shark** stuns the fish it likes to eat with its long, whippy tail.

There are hundreds of different kinds of sharks, but there may be even more that we have never seen – yet!

Sharks have superpowers!

Sharks are the top hunters in the oceans. They can smell, hear and see really well and have other amazing powers, too.

Many sharks have really big eyes. They can even see very well in the dark.

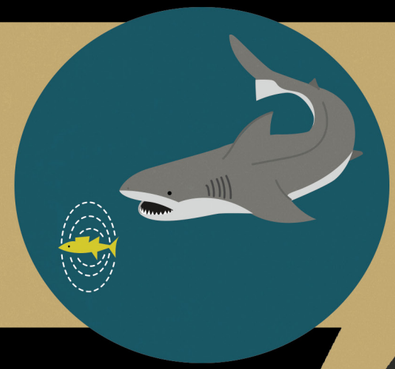


Hammerhead sharks have eyes on each side of their strange-shaped heads. They can see in all directions because their eyes point sideways. Very handy!



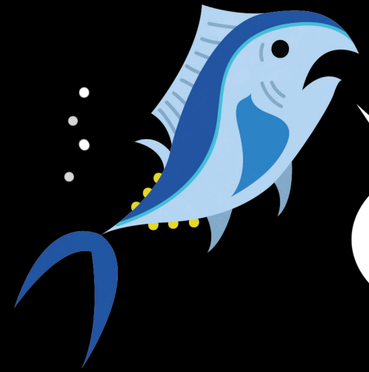
Sharks can smell blood in the water from several kilometres away. That is very scary if you are an injured sea creature.

Electrical signals are given off by all living creatures as they move around. Sharks can sense them with special tiny pits on their noses.

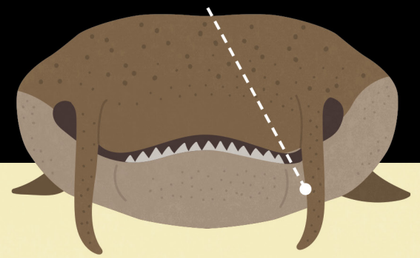


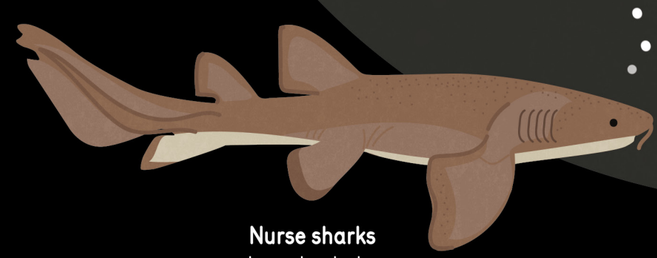
These are sensors which detect the electrical signals so the shark knows exactly where its **prey** is moving.

The sensors are called **ampullae of Lorenzini**. What an amazing name for an incredible superpower!



Sharks that live near the bottom of the sea have **barbels**. These are like special whiskers that pick up the tiny vibrations made by the tasty creatures lurking under the seabed.





Nurse sharks have barbels.