

Great white sharks secretly roam through Bahamas

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The Tongue of the Ocean, seen here in an aerial view, is a deep basin near the Bahamas. Great white sharks were recently detected here. Credit: Florida International University

It's incredibly rare to spot a great white shark in the waters around the Bahamas, but a [new study](#) published in the journal *Frontiers in Marine Science* shows they visit the area more often than people realize.

A team of researchers studied acoustic tracking [data](#), finding that at least

10 tagged white sharks made deep-water, nighttime visits during a five-year period.

"Just because they're not being seen, doesn't mean they're not there," said Simon Dedman, FIU marine scientist and co-author of the study.

"Human activity and white shark habitat may simply not overlap, with white sharks visiting deeper reef waters at night as they migrate through the area."

The white shark is an iconic apex predator, playing an important ecological role across its range. While persistent bycatch and overfishing led to white shark declines, recent studies show evidence of regional recovery of populations in the northwest Atlantic Ocean.

Southeast Florida and the Gulf of Mexico serve as important overwintering grounds for maturing white sharks. Despite the Bahamas' proximity to Florida, only one sighting of a white shark was found in a comprehensive survey of sightings and captures from 1800 to 2010.

Researchers studied acoustic tracking data, detecting the 10 white sharks from 2020 to 2024 along the western edge of the Tongue of the Ocean, a deep-water basin off Central Andros Island. The white sharks were detected along the drop-off zone of the reef at a depth of about 25 meters, exclusively between dusk and dawn.

Seven of the 10 great white sharks were detected once, while the other three were detected across multiple days. The sharks were originally tagged off the coast of the United States and Canada, and were detected around the Bahamas during winter and spring months. The data suggests transient behavior with the sharks just passing through, according to the scientists.

The Bahamas has banned commercial longlining and gillnetting since

1993 and declared its waters a shark sanctuary in 2011. These efforts have made the Bahamas an important refuge for a variety of shark species, but data gaps exist for white sharks. These new research findings expand knowledge of white shark distribution off the Atlantic coast and highlight the importance of collaborative protective measures for species recovery.

More information: T. L. Guttridge et al, First evidence of white sharks, *Carcharodon carcharias*, in the tongue of the ocean, central Bahamas, *Frontiers in Marine Science* (2024). [DOI: 10.3389/fmars.2024.1451808](https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2024.1451808)

Provided by Florida International University

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