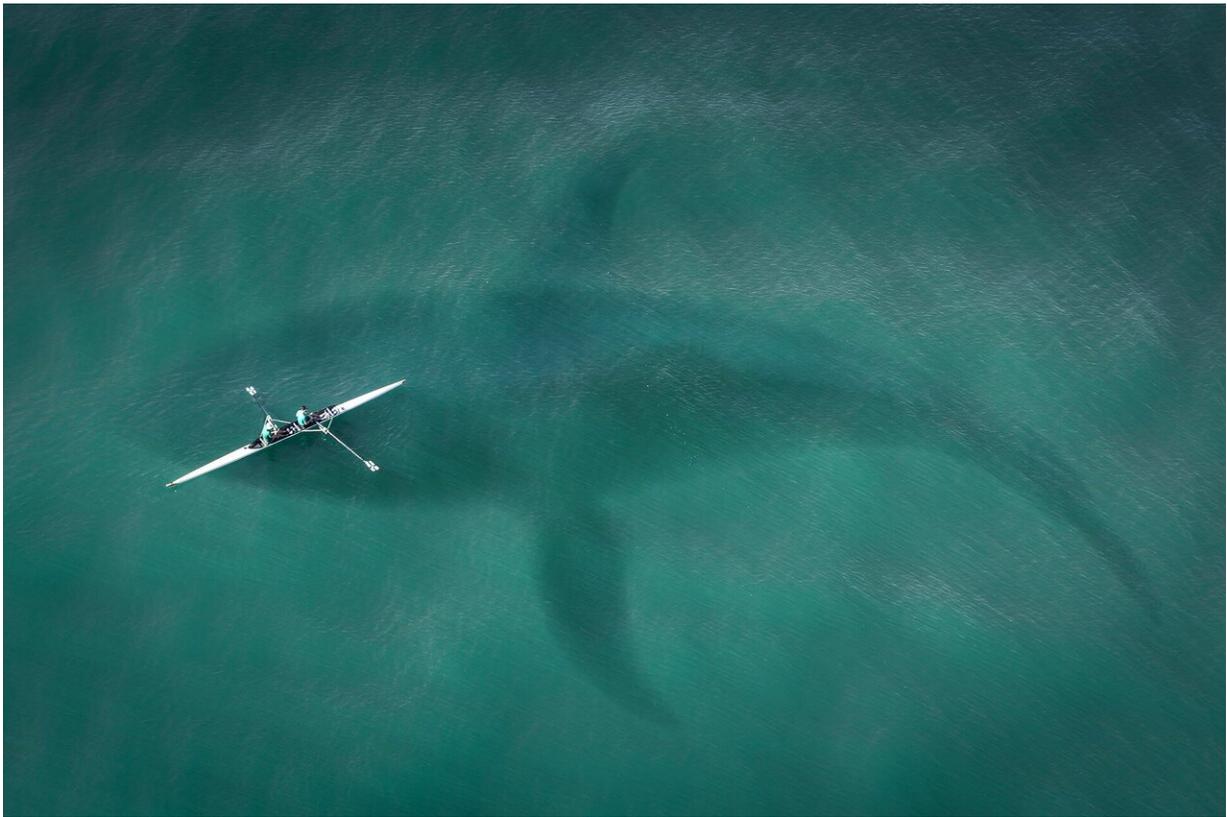


The size of a bus, rare and endangered whale shark spotted off Florida coast

October 21 2019, by Richard Tribou



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Bigger than Jaws, but not nearly as dangerous, the largest fish in the sea, a whale shark, was spotted off the Florida coast.

The endangered species of shark that can normally grow to more than 40 feet does is not normally seen in Florida, staying mainly in more [tropical waters](#) closer to the equator, but has been spotted all the way up to New York on occasion, according to the Florida Museum of Natural History.

Still, the sighting by a group on board a fishing charter out of Palm Beach County spotted the spotted shark and posted an image to the company's Facebook page on Sunday.

"Whale shark!! Amazing! Let's go fishing!!" reads the post from Blue Heron Fishing that sails out of Riviera Beach.

The [whale shark](#) is a plankton-feeding shark, so not dangerous to humans like its tinier cousins like [great white sharks](#).

"Generally considered harmless. However, there have been a few cases of whale sharks butting sportfishing boats, possibly after being provoked," according to a page about the sharks from the Florida Museum of Natural History. "Usually the sharks are more at risk from being struck accidentally by vessels whilst basking or feeding on the surface."

The whale sharks are classified as endangered internationally as they are often hunted by [commercial fisheries](#).

"Although the worldwide population is unknown, the reduction in sightings has placed them in a vulnerable situation," reads a post on sharks-world.com that cited estimates of 7,100 whale sharks in the ocean as of 2016.

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