



HIDDEN

treasures

SPENDING THEIR LIFE IN THE SHADOWS, THESE AMAZING SHARKS ARE CERTAINLY WORTH THE SPOTLIGHT. PORT JACKSON SHARKS HAVE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES THAT SEPARATE THEM FROM THE REST OF THE SHARK WORLD.

Venomous Spines. Blending into their rocky home, Port Jackson sharks have dark markings that run from the tip of their blunt head right down the back of their brown-grey body. With a venomous spine in front of their two top fins, Port Jacksons are provided with protection from any predators attacking from above. Although they are a shark, they are considered harmless to humans.

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Not Your Average Shark. Coming from a family where their name literally means “different teeth” (Hetero + dontus), Port Jackson sharks have small, sharp grasping teeth embedded in the front of their jaw and blunt rounded crushing teeth which sit behind – quite different to the stereotypical row upon row of razor-sharp teeth of their larger shark cousins.

Most sharks need to swim to force water over their gills, but this isn't the case for Port Jacksons as they can pump water into their first enlarged gill and out through the other four gills. By doing this, they don't need to move to breathe and can lie on the sandy bottom of their sheltered home as long as they like. This is especially handy when joining their mates in caves and under ledges during breeding.

Egg-cellent Protection. Port Jackson sharks are oviparous, which means that the female lays eggs. The egg case is a dark brown spiral about 7 to 8cm wide, 15cm long and tough enough to protect the embryo for the 9 to 12 months it will take to develop into a 15cm pup.

The eggs of the Port Jackson shark are often found wedged between rocky crevices. There is a lot of speculation over how these eggs are wedged into rocks or reefs. Female sharks are often seen swimming with egg cases in their mouth. It is also rumoured that a female was seen slapping an egg case into a crevice using her tail...although there is no recorded proof of this behaviour. It is generally thought that, as the egg case is soft when laid by the female, she uses her mouth to wedge the egg case into a rock crevice where it hardens over time.

Aussie Locals. Port Jackson sharks, as their names suggest, are true Aussie locals. First discovered in Port Jackson Harbour, the natural harbour that contains the famous Sydney Harbour, these sharks are only found in southern Australian waters and nowhere else in the world.

Recreational divers often spot Port Jackson sharks hanging out in large open caves along shallow reefs just off the coastline and rest in caves and gullies during the day.

Nocturnal Hunters. As the sun sets, Port Jacksons emerge from their shadowy caves to feed. They glide along the sandy bottom looking for sea urchins, clam and mussels, anything easily crushed between their strong jaws.

fast facts

NAME: Port Jackson shark (*Heterodontus portusjacksoni*) **Length:** 1.6 metres **Distribution:** Southern Australian waters
Features: Distinctive blunt headed-sharks, bold markings which cross the eyes, run along the back to the first dorsal fin, then cross the side of the body, a venomous spine in front of each dorsal fin.