

#### Zebra Shark

Stegostoma fasciatum

# Range/Habitat

- Zebra shark is a common shallow water species of the Indian Ocean and West Pacific regions. Its distribution extends from South Africa to the Red Sea, from Pakistan, India and South East Asia to China, Indonesia and the Philippines, and from Australia and New Caledonia to southern Japan.
- It is found on and adjacent to coral reefs usually in areas with sandy seafloor.

# **Physical Characteristics**

- The name is derived from the striped color pattern when newly hatched. When young, it is dark with yellowish bars. As an adult, it becomes tan with dark spots.
- Adult may reach up to 12 feet (3.65 m) in total and the long tail fin makes up roughly half of this.
- Its body is cylindrical and thick, with prominent ridges along the flanks. The head is broad and conical with a very rounded snout. The upper lobe of the caudal fin is greatly elongated. There are fleshy barbels at the corners of its mouth.
- This shark has a spiracle behind its eye, which allows it to rest motionless on the bottom and still circulate water over its gills.

# Diet/Feeding

- Zebra shark is nocturnal, hunting for food at night and resting on the ocean bottom during the day.
- It preys primarily on benthic invertebrates such as snails, shrimp, crabs and sea urchins, as well as small fishes.
- This shark has the ability to fit into small crevices and holes in the reef as it searches for food.

#### **Conservation Status**

"Vulnerable" on the IUCN Red List.

### **Additional Information**

- It is an oviparous species and egg cases are large, dark brown or purplish black.
- Size of the newly hatched young is 8 to 10 inches (20 26 cm).
- Juvenile will begin feeding on its own in the protected reef shallows.
- It is a slow moving shark and is considered harmless to humans.

#### **Sources**

http://www.waquarium.org/

www.redlist.org/search/details.php?species=41878

http://www.mbayaq.org/efc/living\_species/print.asp?inhab=514

www.fishbase.org

