

# GEORGIA AQUARIUM ANIMAL FACT SHEET

## Zebra shark

*Stegostoma fasciatum*

### Range/Habitat

- The zebra shark is a common shallow water species of the Indian Ocean and west-Pacific region.
- It is found on and adjacent to coral reefs, usually in areas of sandy sea bottom. Its distribution ranges from South Africa to the Red Sea, from Pakistan, India, and Southeast Asia to China, Indonesia and the Philippines, from Australia to New Caledonia, and north to southern Japan.

### Physical Characteristics

- The name is derived from the color pattern found during its juvenile stage.
- When young, it is dark with yellowish bars. As an adult, it is tan with dark spots.
- The zebra shark may reach 11.5 feet (3.5 meters) in total length, and its long tail makes up roughly half its length.
- Its skeleton is made of flexible cartilage, which is reinforced with some mineral deposits.
- The scales, called denticles, are tooth-like in structure and are firmly embedded in the skin.
- The zebra shark is slow-moving and is considered fairly harmless.
- It is somewhat cylindrical with prominent ridges on its sides. The head is broad and conical with a very rounded snout.
- This shark has the ability to fit into small crevices and areas as it searches for food.
- It has fleshy barbels near its mouth to help it find food.

### Diet/Feeding

- The zebra shark eats primarily invertebrates such as snails, shrimp, crabs, sea urchins and small fish.

### Additional Information

- Like most sharks, this shark does not need to swim constantly in order to ventilate its gills.
- This animal is nocturnal, hunting for food at night and resting on the ocean bottom during the day.
- It is an oviparous species and egg cases are large and dark brown or purplish black.
- Size at birth is 8 to 10 inches (20 - 26 centimeters).
- The juvenile will begin feeding on its own in the protected reef shallows.

### Sources

*Zebra or Leopard Shark*. Waikiki Aquarium Education Department Marine Life Profile, Rev. 10/2000

<http://www.waquarium.org/>

[www.redlist.org/search/details.php?species=41878](http://www.redlist.org/search/details.php?species=41878)

[http://www.mbayaq.org/efc/living\\_species/print.asp?inhab=514](http://www.mbayaq.org/efc/living_species/print.asp?inhab=514)