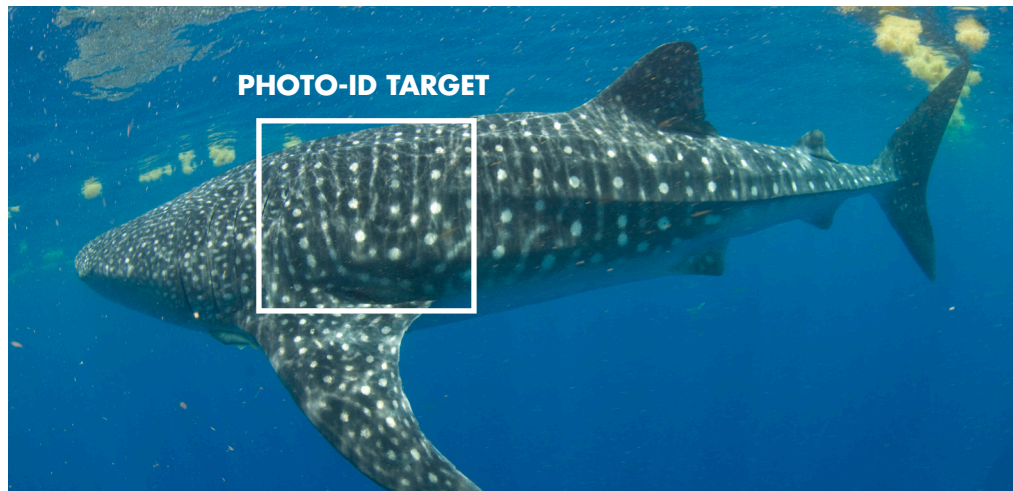


**Participate in  
Scientific  
Research!**

## **REPORT** whale shark sightings in the Northern Gulf of Mexico

Biologists at the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL) in Ocean Springs, Mississippi NEED YOUR HELP gathering information about whale sharks, the world's largest fish.

Oil rig workers, pilots, fishermen and others who frequent offshore areas of the northern Gulf of Mexico are vital to GCRL's sightings program. Be a part of the research and report your whale shark sightings online today.



### **Safe Whale Shark Encounter Guidelines**

1. Vessel should approach from ahead of the animal's direction, while maintaining a slow speed (8 knots or less) and a distance of 100 ft.
2. The maximum number of swimmers should be 5 and always have a safety spotter on board.
3. Swimmers should maintain a distance of 5-10 ft.
4. Do NOT touch, ride or harass the shark. Remember: these are large, wild animals, whose behavior can be unpredictable.
5. Support data collection: Report your encounter and submit photographs for photo-identification library.

*Your participation and information is greatly appreciated and critical for us to gain a better understanding of the effects of the oil spill on whale sharks in the northern Gulf of Mexico.*



**GULF COAST RESEARCH LABORATORY**

703 East Beach Drive • Ocean Springs, MS 39564

[www.usm.edu/gcrl](http://www.usm.edu/gcrl)

**facebook**

visit us on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/whalesharkresearch>

### **You Can Help—**

It is vital to document all sightings of whale sharks in the northern Gulf of Mexico at this time. If you encounter a whale shark, please report your sighting online at <http://www.usm.edu/gcrl/whaleshark>.

Please share this online survey with others to ensure all observations are reported.

### **TO REPORT A SIGHTING**

Please complete the survey at [www.usm.edu/gcrl/whaleshark](http://www.usm.edu/gcrl/whaleshark)

#### **Information to include**

- Date, time and duration of sighting
- Location (GPS coordinates)
- Approximate size and number of sharks
- Observed behavior
- Associated species
- Photos/video if available (Note: region behind the gill slits on the left side of the animal—this is used for identification)
- Any other distinguishing features (i.e. numbered marker tags located behind the dorsal fin—please notate number if possible)

*Report may also be submitted by e-mail, mail, phone or fax:*

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