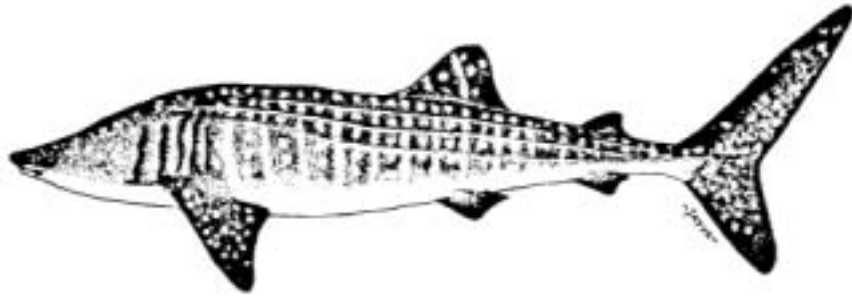


Rhincodon typus Smith, 1828



English **Name:** Whale shark

Family: RHINCODONTIDAE

Local Name: Fehurihi

Order: Orectolobiformes

Size: Rare above 12 m: possibly to 21 iii

Distinctive Characters: With its huge size and distinctive spotting, whale shark cannot be confused with any other species. Very wide, nearly terminal mouth with numerous minute teeth. Very broad head.

Colour: Dark above with numerous narrow whitish bars and! rows of spots. Pale below.

Habitat and Biology: A pelagic filter feeder, occurring singly or in small school, often near the surface. Feeds mainly on plankton, sometimes on small pelagic crustaceans or small schooling fishes.

Distribution: Circumtropical.

Remarks: *Rhincodon typus* is the largest living fish. Despite its large size, it is not a dangerous species. It is sometimes seen by divers, normally during south-west monsoon off the east coast, and during the north-east monsoon off the west coast. No specimens have been collected, or likely to be collected, but this species have been seen by Fisheries staff occasionally. The whale shark being rare and endangered, is a protected species in the Maldives.

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