

PELAGIC THRESHER SHARK

SCIENTIFIC CLASSIFICATION

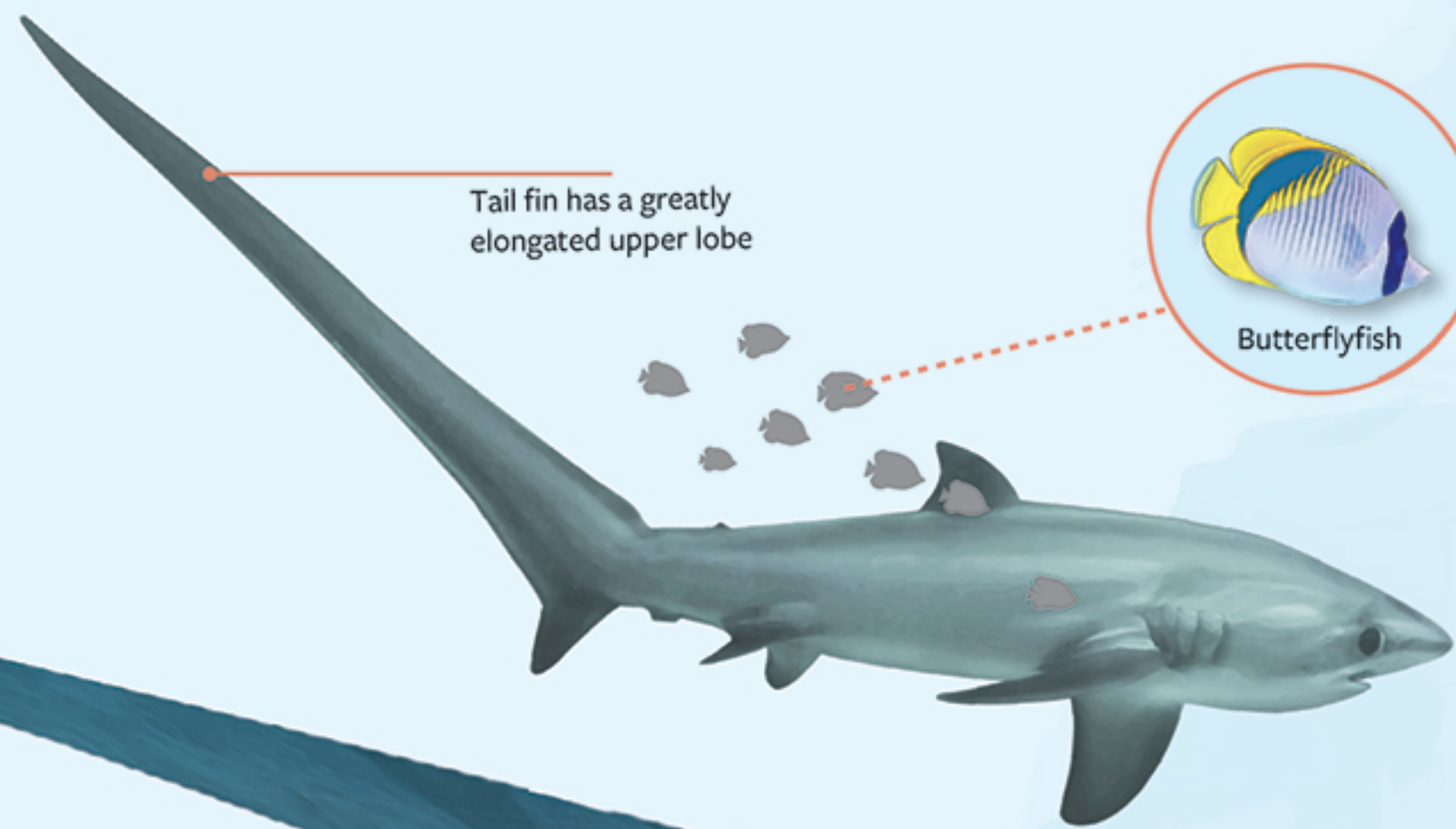
Kingdom : Animalia
 Phylum : Chordata
 Class : Chondrichthyes
 Subclass : Elasmobranchii
 Superorder : Selachimorpha
 Order : Lamniformes
 Family : Alopiidae
 Genus : *Alopias*
 Species : *Alopias pelagicus*

CONSERVATION STATUS

EX EW CR EN **VU** NT LC
 Extinct Vulnerable Threatened

ELONGATED TAIL

Easily recognisable for their long narrow upper caudal fin that can be as long or even longer than the body of the shark itself. The tail is used as a weapon to stun and herd its prey making them easier to catch and consume.



Tail fin has a greatly elongated upper lobe

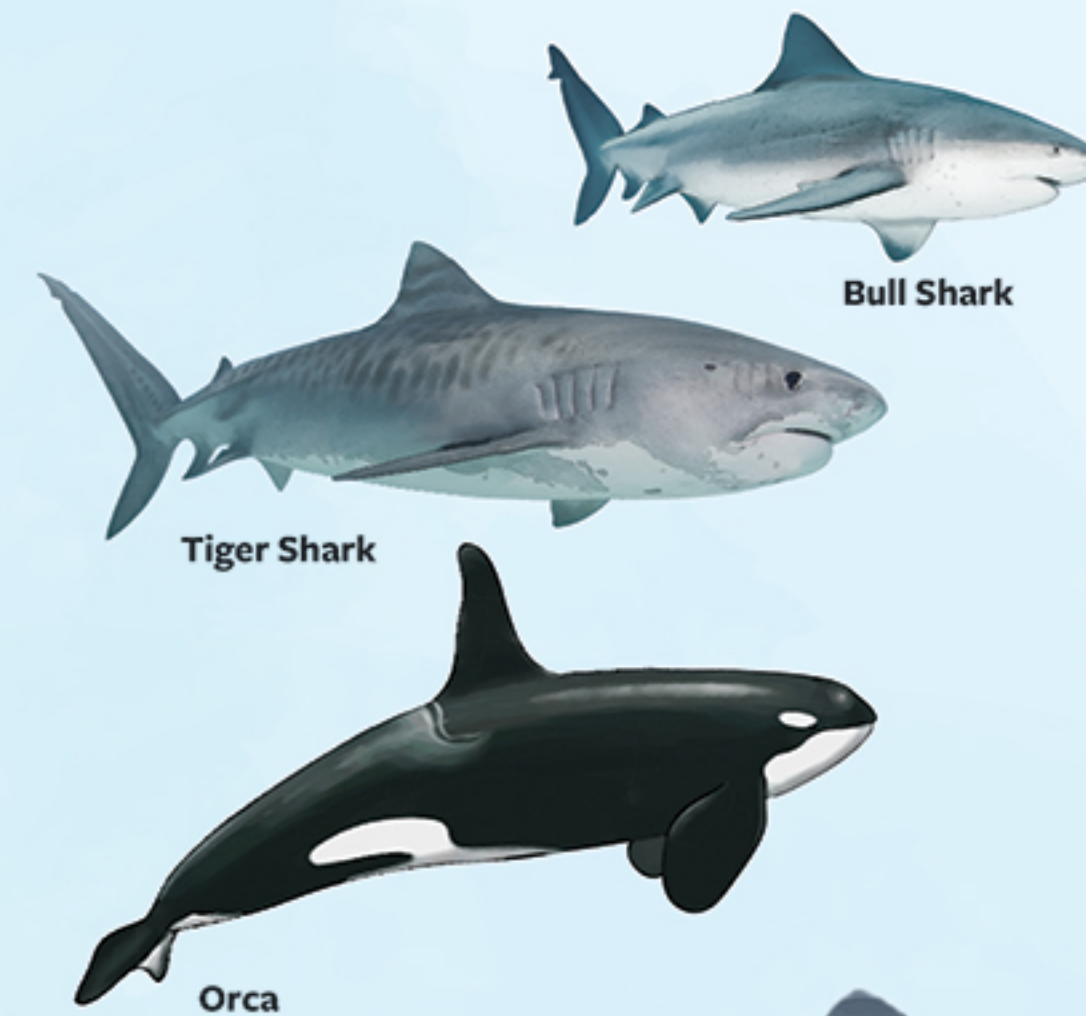


CLEANING STATIONS

Threshers will ascend from the depths to specific areas known as cleaning stations to rid themselves of parasites and other materials that are eaten by smaller fish and shrimps. Finding a location to witness this cleaning symbiosis is perhaps the only way to reliably encounter pelagic thresher sharks.

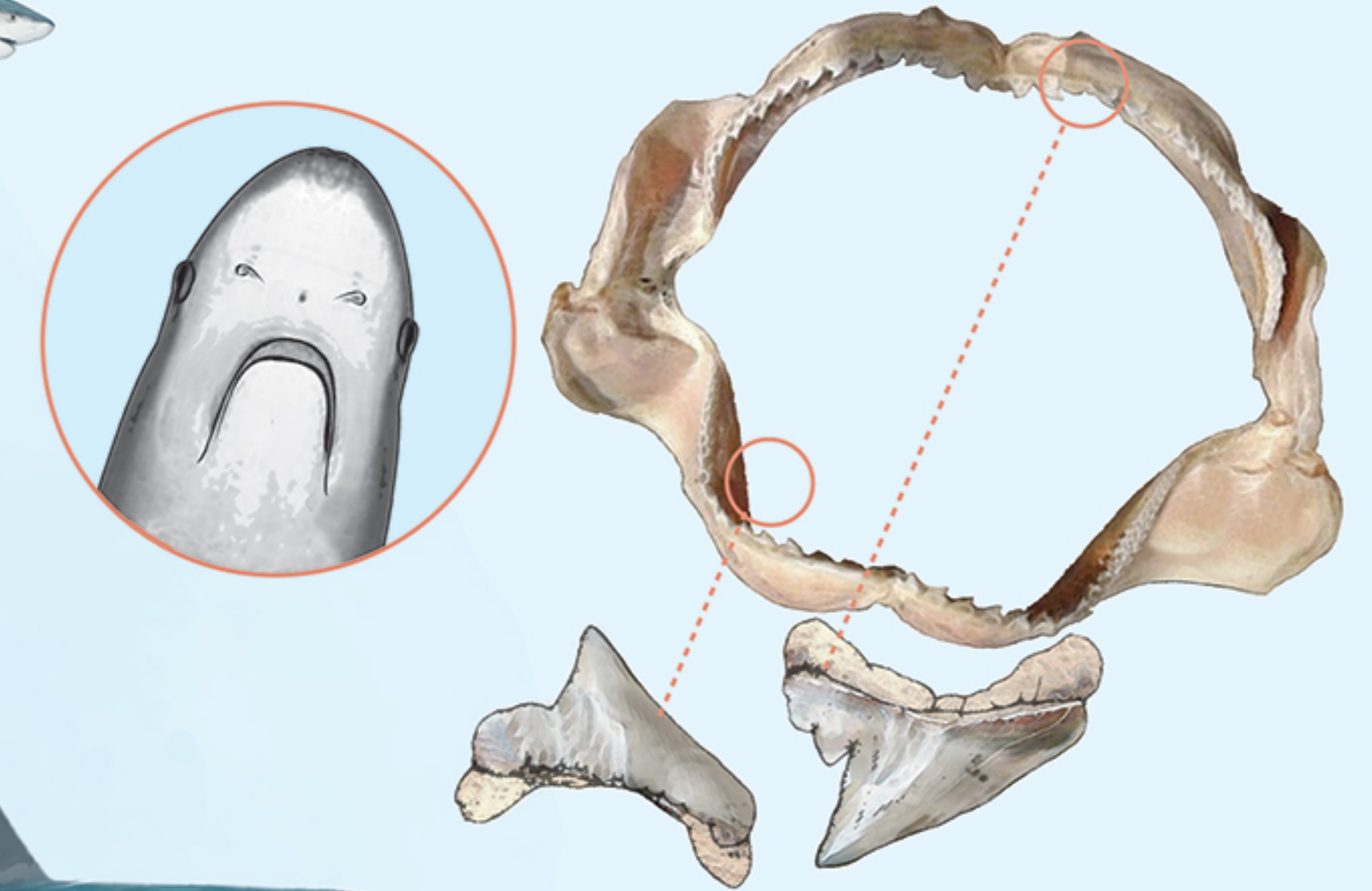
PREDATORS

Vulnerable to other large predatory fish (including other sharks) and toothed whales that share the same geography and habitat.



JAWS AND TEETH

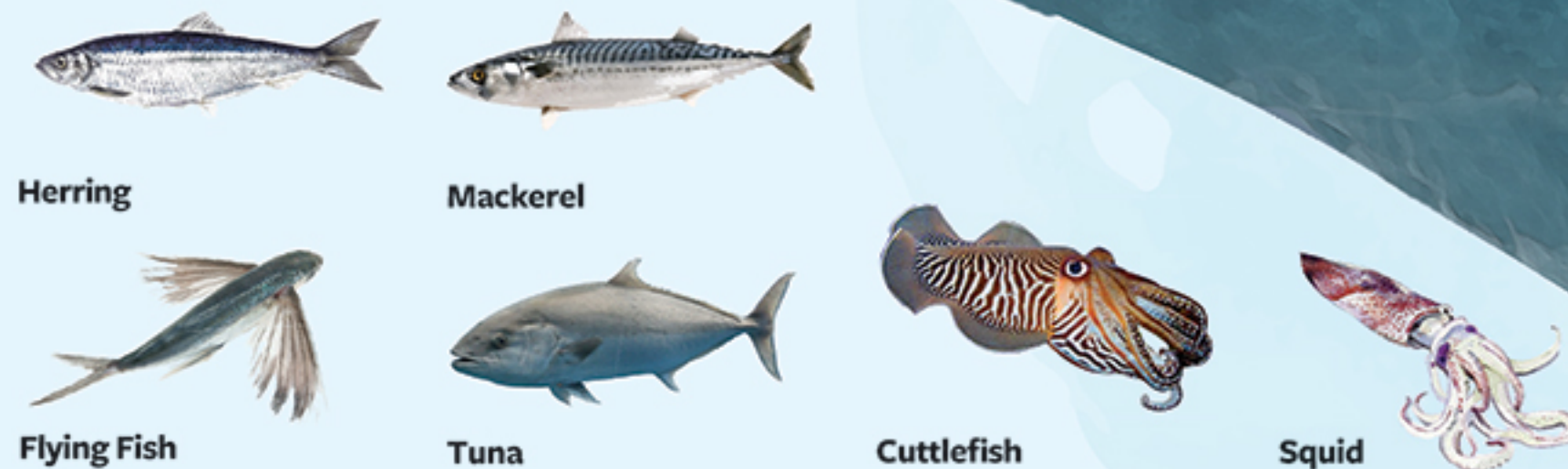
The head is short with a cone shaped snout, small mouth and moderately large eyes. The teeth are smooth edged and very small, and each tooth root is curved inwards. The upper and lower jaws both contains 21-22 teeth each side, usually without a central tooth row.



Maximum Size
4.28 metres
 Average Size
2.76 metres
 Maximum Weight
363.8 kilograms

DIET

This shark feeds almost exclusively on pelagic schooling fishes such as herrings, mackerels and flying fish. They may also consume pelagic squid and cuttlefish, and are known to follow large schools of fish into shallow water where they then attack with their long, powerful tail.



GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Found in warm and temperate offshore waters of the Pacific and Indian oceans, but reliable records are lacking partly due to its confusion with other thresher shark species.

Indo-Pacific: the Red Sea, Arabian Sea, Maldives, Somalia, South Africa, Western Australia, China, Taiwan, Japan, New Caledonia, Hawaiian Islands and Tahiti.

Eastern Pacific: Gulf of California and the Galapagos.

HABITAT

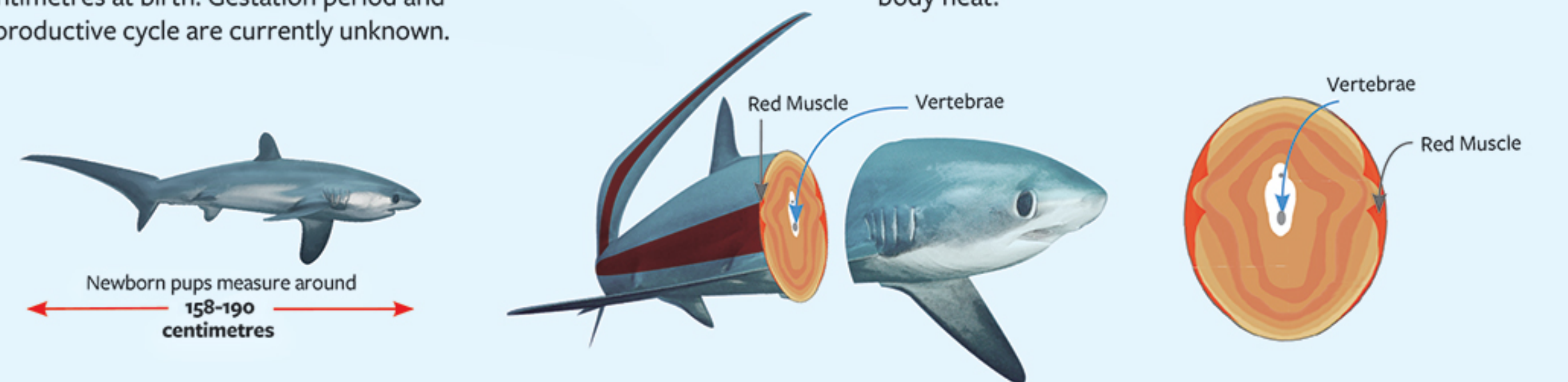
Much of the life cycle of the pelagic thresher shark is still a mystery, but they are known to inhabit primarily pelagic open ocean environments and are only occasionally sighted in shallow waters. They have been recorded from the surface to depths of at least 150 meters. They will ascend from deep water to feed and visit cleaning stations.

TOURISM

The pelagic thresher shark is an elusive deep water species that avoids humans and are therefore very difficult to encounter. Only one place in the world exists where it is common to see this species and that is in Malapascua in the Philippines. Divers need to be in the water early, as the sharks are most often seen at sunrise when they appear from the depths to visit a cleaning station known as Monad Shoal. Visitors from all over the world descend upon this tiny island, hoping to see the thresher shark for themselves and this tourism activity now sustains the majority of people who live in the area.

REPRODUCTION

Thresher sharks are ovoviviparous, with embryos nourished by a yolk sac in early development before feeding on other ova produced by the mother after the yolk sac is absorbed. Brood size is normally two pups measuring between 158-190 centimetres at birth. Gestation period and reproductive cycle are currently unknown.



Area of distribution

