

Warming sea lures great white sharks to UK

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Deadly: Researchers say Cornwall will soon provide perfect conditions for sharks like the one above.

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Should we welcome them? The great white is the most feared of all sharks, and the waters off Devon and Cornwall are perfect habitats for it. Some believe it may be here already.

What's happening?

A voice speaks over a film of deep water. "There is a creature alive today who has survived millions of years of evolution without change... It will attack and devour anything!"

This is a trailer for the blockbuster 1975 movie *Jaws*. It tells of an American seaside resort terrorised by a great white shark. Now some experts are predicting that great whites could be coming to British waters.

Britain already has a huge number of sharks: according to some estimates, 10 million small ones and 100,000 larger ones. Many are small and quite harmless.

Great whites, which can grow to five metres in length, are a different matter.

Find out more

In the US, great whites are a growing concern. Five attacks were recorded off Cape Cod, on the east coast, in the last 12 years — one in which someone died.

The worry for Britain is that our sea provides a very similar habitat. An organisation called Ocearch, which tracks shark movements, believes that great whites may now be heading for these shores.

This is partly because Britain has a lot of seals — over 130,000 according to experts. And seals are a big part of some sharks' diets.

Some people say

"The ocean stirs the heart, inspires the imagination and brings eternal joy to the soul."

Robert Wyland (1956 –), American artist

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Have you swum in the sea? Would you like to see a shark in the wild?

2. Wonder

Water temperature is another factor. With global warming, sea temperatures are rising, and could become perfect for great whites.

There have actually been reported sightings of great whites off Britain since 1965. But a team which investigated them found that out of 100, only 12 of these were credible — and some might have been more than one sighting of the same shark.

Experts say that sharks should be more afraid of us than we are of them. More than 100 million are killed around the world each year, and the population is falling as a result of overfishing, climate change and plastic pollution.

Should we welcome them?

Some say

Yes! Sharks are extraordinary creatures which very rarely attack humans. To see them in the water is a thrilling experience, and the arrival of great whites would add to Britain's biodiversity.

Others think

No! Even one person killed by a shark is one too many. If they become a common feature of British waters, people will be afraid to swim in the sea and the economies of coastal resorts will suffer.

What do you think?

What questions do you have? - For example: How many kinds of shark are there? How many teeth do they have?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain and one thing we cannot say for sure.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - You meet someone who wants to release great white sharks in the sea near you. Think about what you would say.

5. Express

What do others believe? - Which is the scariest land creature? Take it in turns to say.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Imagine you are asked to help with a shark-spotting project. Make a chart showing the different types mentioned here.