SharkEye Project
Background & FAQ

Marine Biologists at UC Santa Barbara's Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory are conducting marine wildlife observations at Santa Claus Lane Beach and Padaro Beach using a small unoccupied aerial system (aka drone) equipped with a video camera. One of our first objectives with this research is to learn more about the behavior of white sharks (Carcharodon carcharias) so that we can use science to help our community share the ocean more safely with sharks.

Juvenile white sharks have been known to congregate at "nursery" beaches, such as Santa Claus Lane Beach. New data from this research will improve our understanding of white shark behavior, what brings them to these beaches, when they are likely to arrive and depart, and what areas they most often use. This kind of information can help us to learn more about the science of white sharks, inform conservation efforts, and give us hard data about how to adapt public safety measures to be safer at our beaches.

To learn more about the project visit **sharkeye.org**

Frequently asked questions

How often do you fly the drone?
Drone flights are conducted every weekday morning, weather and logistics permitting. Our flight program is most active in the late spring and summer months.

When are sharks most common in Santa Barbara?
Juvenile sharks are usually sighted between April and October, however hotspot locations and numbers can vary by year. Last year the highest number of shark sightings at Santa Claus Lane Beach were in the Fall.

Adult sharks tend to spend more time offshore, but they can be sighted closer to the coast in the late Fall through to February.

Do you record the beach?
Video recording, with the camera pointed straight down, occurs only when the drone is over the ocean, and other precautions are taken to protect the safety and privacy of people and animals on the beach.

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Do you film using the drone over the beach?
Video recording, with the camera pointed straight down, occurs only when the drone is over the ocean, and other precautions are taken to protect the safety and privacy of people and animals on the beach. We do not fly nor do we record over people or houses.

Why is Santa Claus Beach believed to be a nursery habitat for white sharks? Beaches provide a safe environment for juvenile white sharks to grow, away from larger predatory sharks. They benefit from the warmer waters and access to food, especially stingrays.

What happens when you see a shark?
We contact the local surf shop and surf camp owners when there is a shark sighting. If the shark is large (i.e. > 8 feet) or acting aggressively, we also inform Santa Barbara County Park officials so that they can use this information to make any public safety decisions that they deem appropriate (e.g. posting shark signs, closure of beaches). Please always follow any Santa Barbara County Park advisory signs.

Are there more sharks near the beach than before?
White shark populations in Southern California appear to be increasing, probably due to both stronger legal protections for white sharks, reductions in gillnet fishing near California's coastlines that killed many marine animals including juvenile white sharks, and an increase in food sources, such as sea lion populations, that have also recovered.

What should I do if I see a shark in the water?
Non-emergency shark sightings can be reported to Santa Barbara County Parks at: (805) 2802724. Please take note of the time, location, and behavior of the shark. An online resource to help differentiate between shark fins and dolphin fins can be found here: **bit.ly/3ehEkui**

Emergency shark sightings should be reported to 911.

For further tips on shark and beach safety please consult this video prepared by Cal State University Long Beach **https://youtu.be/FmxnhvuUZ-A**

To learn more review a recent webinar on shark science and shark safety hosted by UC Santa Barbara **https://youtu.be/iI24GZnGQko**

Can we support UC Santa Barbara's research on white sharks?
Yes. We could not maintain our shark survey and research program without the generosity of local funders. To help support our surveys please contact: **boi-contact@ucsb.edu**

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