



Codes of Conduct for Shark Interactions in Fuvahmulah, Maldives

©Azzam Al Mannai



**Ministry of Tourism
and Environment**



**FUVAHMULAH
BIOSPHERE
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CITY COUNCIL**



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DISCLAIMER

These Codes of Conduct were developed together with the Fuvahmulah dive industry as a guide for diving operators and their guests, with the overall goal of ensuring safe, enjoyable and sustainable experiences. It is worth highlighting that the current Diving Regulation of the Maldives, which emanates from the Tourism Act (No.2/99), prohibits the feeding of sharks.

The Codes of Conduct do not guarantee complete guest safety, nor is it an exhaustive list of every potential hazard or safety measure related to diving with sharks. Diving with sharks involves inherent risks beyond the control of operators. It is the responsibility of the diving industry to stay informed about the latest safety practices and regulations, comply with all applicable laws and regulations, and ensure the safety and welfare of their divers.

The authors do not accept liability or responsibility for any loss, injury or damage of any kind that may occur as a result of the application or non-application of these Codes of Conduct. Divers and guides who swim with sharks do so at their own risk. We encourage everyone involved to take necessary precautions and prioritise safety above all else.

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RATIONALE

Fuvahmulah, Maldives, is world-famous for its shark diving, with regular encounters with pelagic thresher and tiger sharks, silvertip and reef sharks, as well as other oceanic and mesopelagic sharks (e.g. scalloped hammerhead, silky sharks, etc.). Their occurrence in Fuvahmulah year-round makes the island a unique diving destination for shark interactions. Such opportunities need to be supported by active management to ensure safe and enjoyable experiences for divers, and minimal disturbance to the sharks and their habitats.

In order to sustain a successful wildlife tourism industry in Fuvahmulah, local dive operators, Fuvahmulah City Council, Ministry of Tourism and Environment, Diving Association of Fuvahmulah (DAF), and supported by the UK's Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCPP), have developed these Codes of Conduct for shark interactions in Fuvahmulah.

BEFORE THE DIVES

A detailed safety briefing is compulsory prior to diving with any sharks so guests know how to interact with them safely in the water. This must include:

- Dive procedures
- Dress code
- Diver behaviour in the water
- Use of camera gear
- Shark behaviour
- Guide's responsibilities
- Risks to divers
- Emergency procedures

It is the guide's responsibility to ensure environmental conditions including visibility, currents and swell are safe before and during the dive. They have the responsibility to end the dive at any time.





Code of Conduct for Thresher Sharks

Thresher Sharks - Interaction Guidelines - Fuvahmulah



Stay at least 5m from the sharks



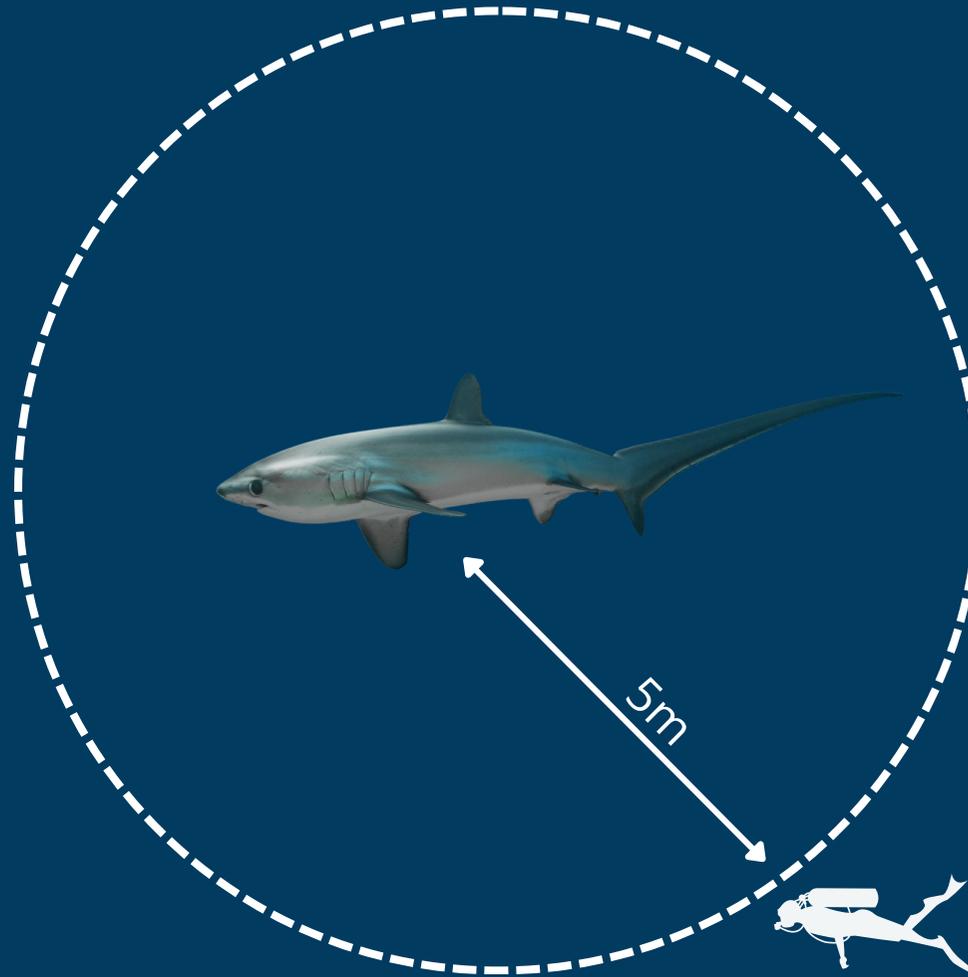
Max. 6 divers per guide



No flash, strobes or video lights



Stay close to the reef and follow your guide



No touching, chasing or harrassing the sharks



No tank banging, shakers or other noise



Stay off the cleaning stations



No erratic or sudden movements

Do not obstruct the path of the sharks or approach from above

An aerial photograph of Tiger Harbour, showing clear turquoise water with several tiger sharks swimming. The water transitions from light turquoise near the rocky shore to a deeper blue further out. Two prominent rocky shorelines are visible at the top and bottom of the frame. The text 'Tiger Sharks at Tiger Harbour Code of Conduct' is overlaid in white, bold font in the center of the image.

Tiger Sharks at Tiger Harbour Code of Conduct

Tiger Sharks - Interaction Guidelines - Tiger Harbour, Fuvahmulah



Stay at least 5m from the sharks



No flash, strobes or video lights



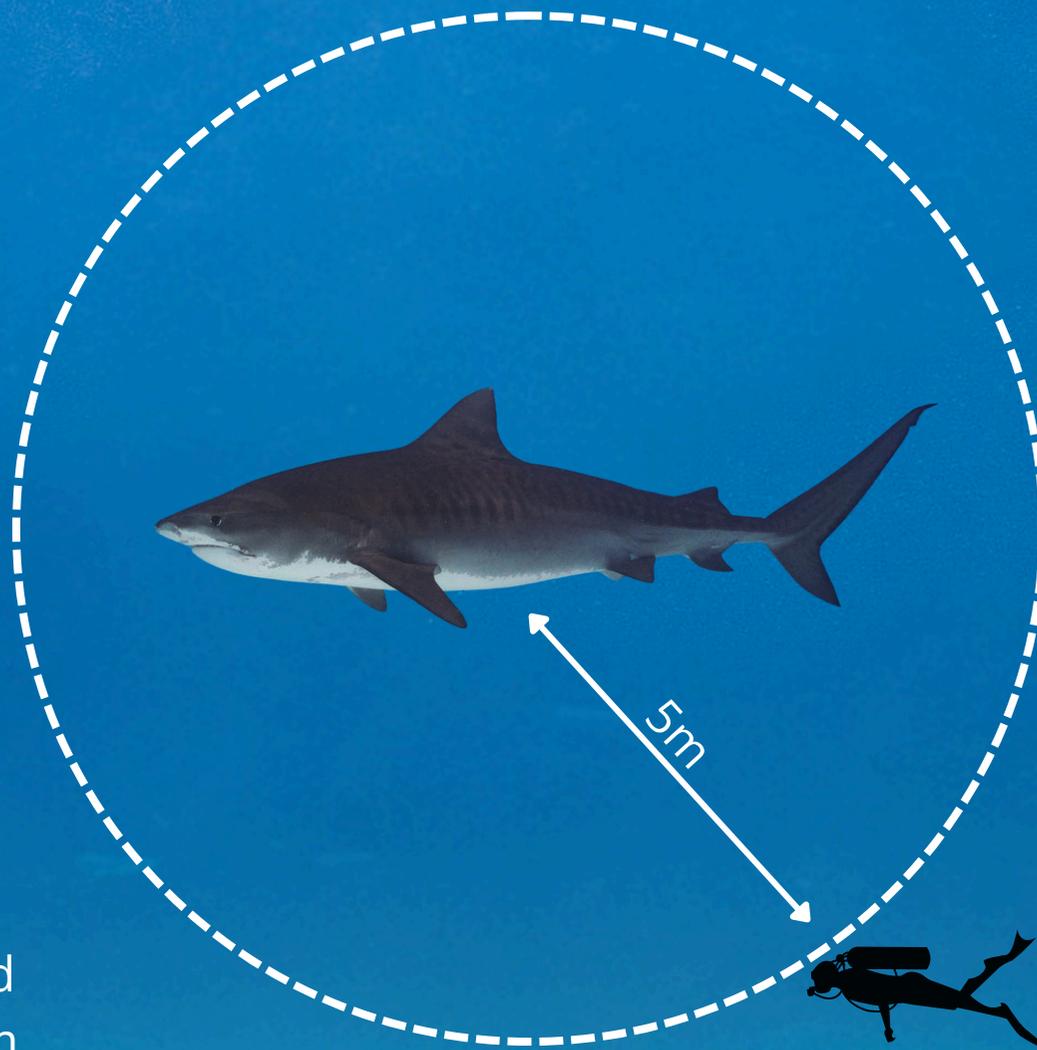
Hood and gloves recommended



Dark-coloured, full exposure suits must be worn



Kneel on seabed and do not swim around



No touching, chasing or harassing sharks



Max. 4 divers per guide



No erratic or sudden movements

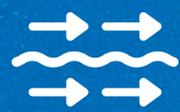


Maintain eye contact with the shark(s) and remain vigilant at all times



Do not obstruct the path of the shark or approach from above

Tiger Sharks at Tiger Harbour - Procedure for Operators



Divers to stay up-current of the bait/fish heads at all times



A minimum of 5m between bait/fish heads and divers

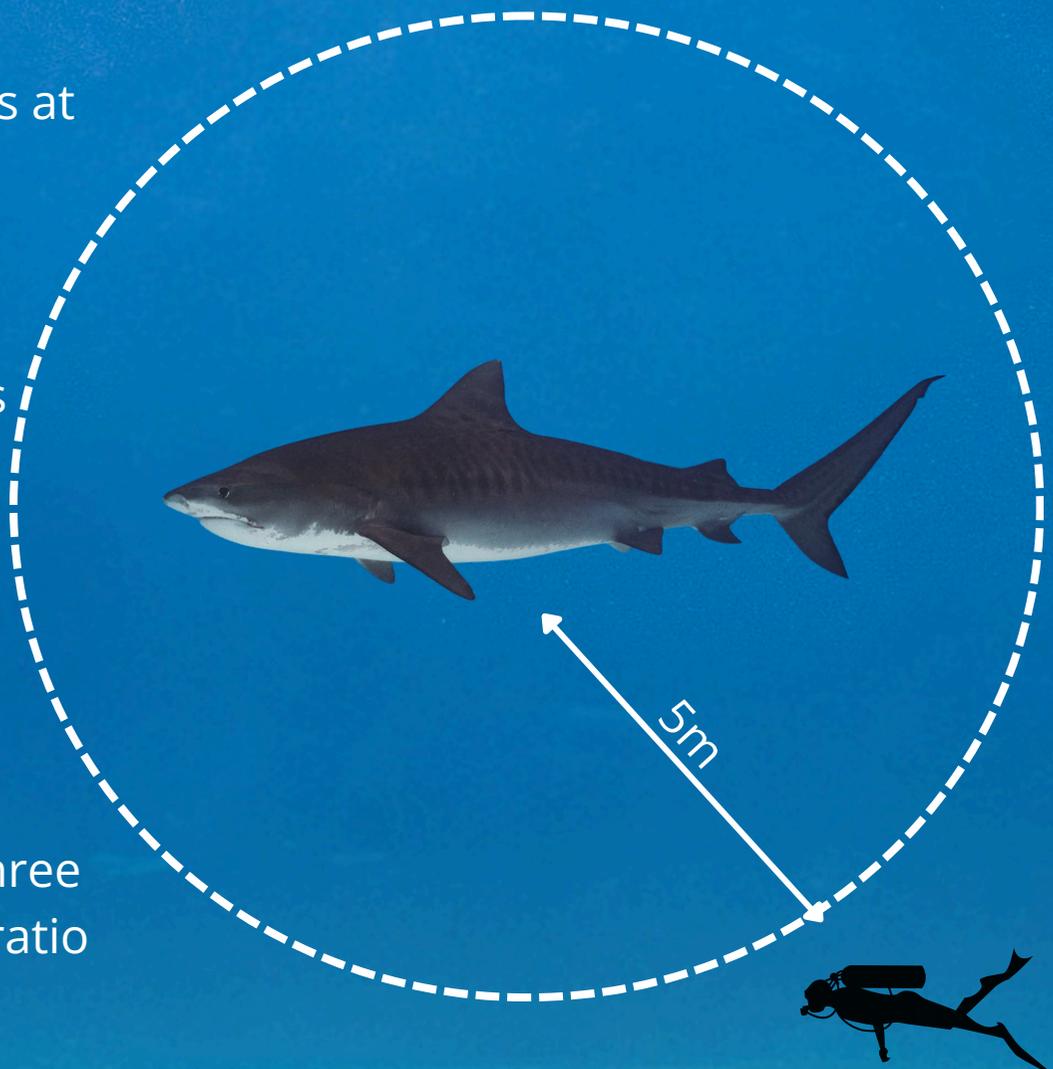


No hand-feeding by guides or divers



Minimum of three guides, and a ratio of at least one guide every 4 divers

*Bait/fish heads may not be necessary on every dive depending on shark activity and local conditions (Lead Guide's decision).



No handling of bait/fish* heads by guests



Prohibited use of marlin or other billfishes as bait



Guides can only carry cameras under the Lead Guide's discretion



Max. of 20 divers

Code of Conduct for Other Predatory Sharks



Predatory Sharks - Interaction Guidelines - Fuvahmulah



Stay at least 3m from the sharks



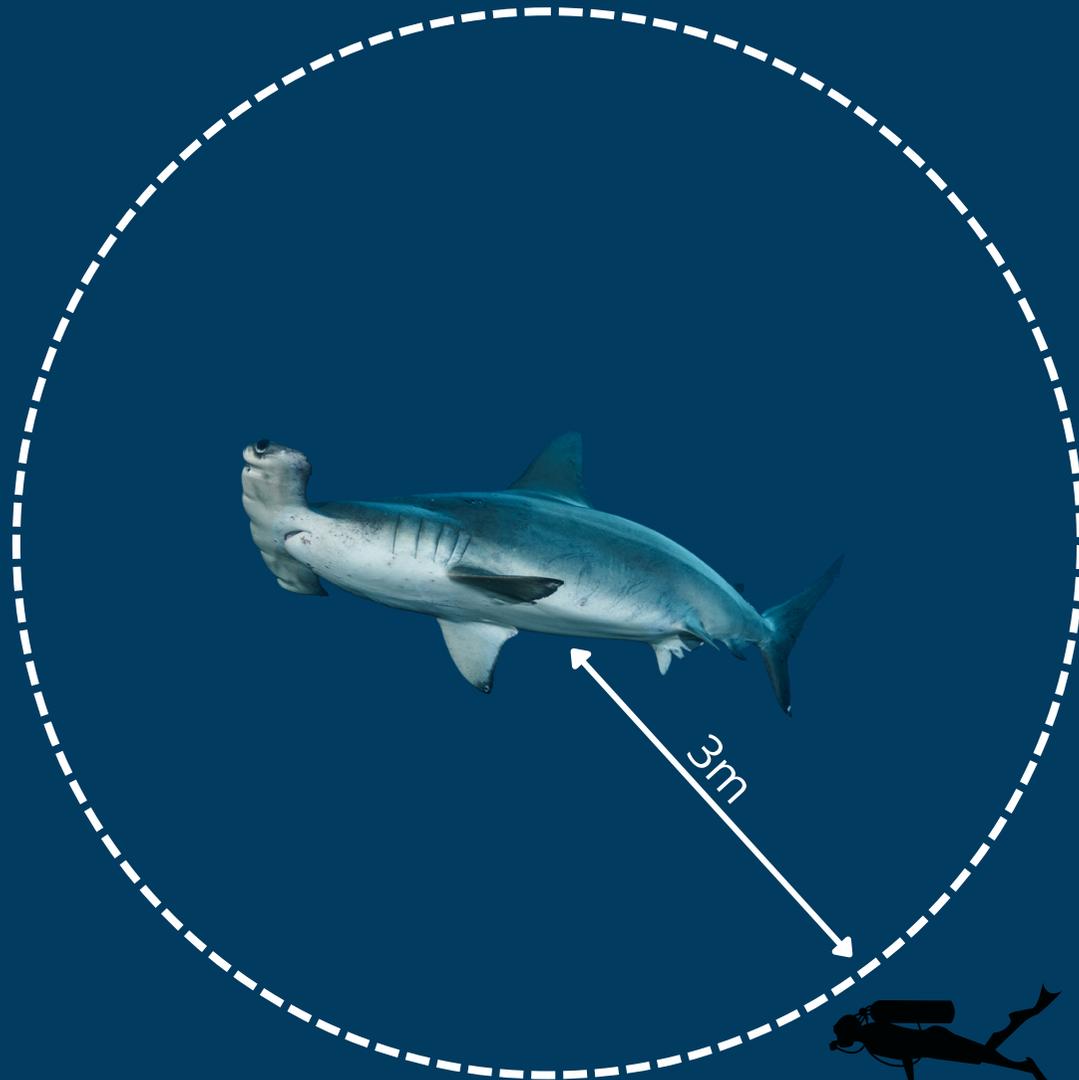
Stay as a group and follow your guide



Be mindful of light and strobe use



Wear dark exposure suits and gear



No touching, chasing or harassing the sharks



Keep noise to a minimum to avoid disturbance



No erratic or sudden movements



No provisioning outside of Tiger Harbour

Do not obstruct the path of the shark(s) or break up the group



Max. 6 divers per guide

Shark Diving in Fuvahmulah - Best Practices

- Ensure you have the appropriate diving qualification and experience for the dive.
- Always listen to your guides.
- Maintain a safe distance from the sharks.
- Maintain at least 5m distance from the bait/fish heads (if diving Tiger Harbour).
- Remain calm and vigilant.
- Maintain eye contact with sharks.
- Ensure you are adhering to the appropriate dress code.
- Do not touch, chase or harass the sharks, and stay clear of their path.
- Your guides will instruct you how and when, if appropriate, it might be necessary to redirect a shark.



CONTACT

- Fuvahmulah City Council
<https://fuvahmulah.gov.mv/>



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