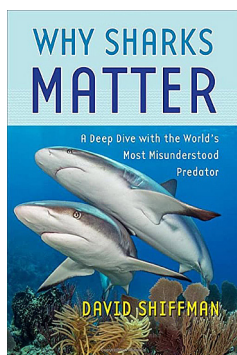


## Why Sharks Matter: a Deep Dive with the World's Most Misunderstood Predator

By David Shiffman. 2022. Johns Hopkins University Press. 312 pages, 15 colour illustrations, and 34 black and white illustrations, 24.95 USD, Hardcover or E-book.

*Why Sharks Matter* is written by David Shiffman, a marine conservation biologist and postdoctoral researcher at Arizona State University with a lifelong passion for and dedication to sharks. The goals of this book, as stated in the introduction, are to teach the reader why sharks are remarkable, what benefits sharks bring, and what you can do



to help protect them. Another stated aim is to teach the reader about various options for shark conservation and management, especially those supported by research data but not widely discussed in non-expert circles. Most of the book is dedicated to the latter subject, with a focus on population-level threats and data-driven decision-making.

A more accurate title for this book may have been “Shark Conservation and Management Strategies”. Only one chapter covers the subject of the title directly—The Ecological Significance of Sharks (Chapter 3)—whereas the bulk of the book discusses conservation threats and strategies, and what is being done to help shark populations. If you are looking for a book primarily composed of shark miscellany to learn more about these fascinating species and their unique behaviours and adaptations, this is not that book.

The author’s enthusiasm for sharks is obvious, and his humour and informal writing style are strengths. Myth-busting is a recurring topic, and the author’s

frustration with misconceptions about sharks, conservation threats, and management options is apparent throughout the book; it has the whiff of someone who has dealt with one too many Reddit Ask Me Anything sessions. Most sections of chapters are short, a few pages at most, and cover a wide breadth. As a result, the writing can come across as a bit scattered when subjects change abruptly. My favourite chapter was How are Scientists Helping Sharks? (Chapter 8), which includes short vignettes on various shark researchers and their areas of study, providing an inside look at conservation projects and practices.

While there are a few grey-scale images and diagrams embedded in the text, the other images referred to are found as numbered plates in a high quality colour insert, located in the middle of the book. In addition to the Bibliography, the book also has an accompanying website with supplementary information for the curious reader.

Although the writing can occasionally come across as defensive, the author clearly is an expert in his field. This book fills a niche as an accessible, plain-language introduction to shark conservation policy. *Why Sharks Matter* is best suited for those seeking a primer on shark conservation and population management issues and options, especially those interested in the American context. For those seeking an in-depth book about sharks’ roles in the ecosystem and their behaviour or biology, I suggest looking elsewhere.

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