

Predators and Their Prey



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The great white shark is lucky. It is a predator. No other animal in the sea hunts it as prey.

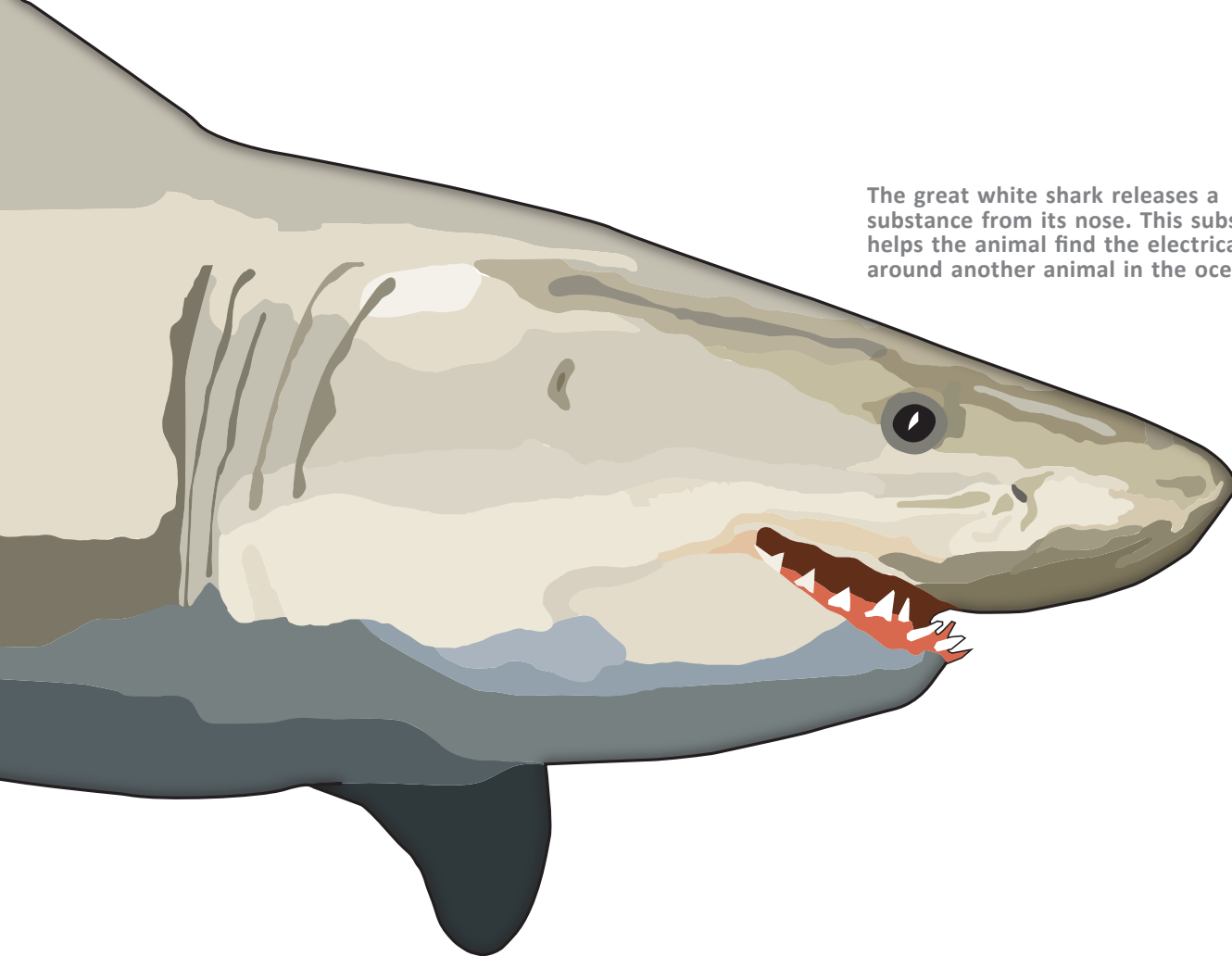
Chapter One

Predator at Sea: Great White Shark

If you've ever watched a nature show, you've probably seen **predators** in action. A predator is an animal that captures and eats other animals. Its victims are its **prey**. Some animals are both predator and prey.

In every **habitat** of the world, from ocean and islands to savannas, predators hunt prey to survive. One well-known predator of the sea is the great white shark.

Most great white sharks grow no longer than 26 feet, a little longer than a large car. The great white shark uses two tools to hunt down its prey. The first tool is a strong sense of smell. The shark has two nostrils on its **snout**, but it does not use them to breathe as we do. Sharks actually breathe through their **gills**. They use their nostrils to sniff out prey. For example, sharks can smell blood from long distances. If an **unsuspecting** victim is hurt and bleeding, the shark can use its sense of smell to track it down.



The great white shark releases a substance from its nose. This substance helps the animal find the electrical field around another animal in the ocean.

The shark's other hunting tool is also in its snout. Every living thing in the ocean gives off **electrical** charges where its skin touches the water. This creates an electrical field around its body. A substance in the shark's snout helps it locate these electrical fields. Again, think about the sea creature that is injured and bleeding. Because it is hurt, it gives off more electricity. Sharks can sense the heightened electrical field. This makes the injured animal an easier **target**.

The great white shark hunts many different sea creatures. Its prey includes fish, whales, other sharks, and squid. Its favorite prey is sea lions and seals. To catch one of these animals, the shark sneaks up from behind. It waits just under the surface of the water. When the sea lions and seals swim near, the shark makes a surprise attack!

The great white has a fairly easy life in the ocean. It has no need to worry about looking over its shoulder, or **fin**, because no other sea animal hunts it. After a nice meal, the great white naps peacefully in its watery home.

Chapter Two

Island Predator: Komodo Dragon

The Komodo dragon is the largest lizard in the world. It grows to about 10 feet long and weighs as much as 150 pounds. The lizard lives on the island of Komodo and other nearby islands in Indonesia.

Komodo dragons dig a **burrow** to hatch their eggs in the spring. The babies live in trees for the first few months of their lives. Once they grow up, Komodo dragons hunt many kinds of prey. They attack large animals, including pigs, deer, and cattle. They sometimes eat other Komodo dragons, both young ones and adults. Sometimes Komodo dragons even attack human beings.

These predators do not need to fight hard to kill their prey. They just need to get one good bite into their victim. Their mouth sends a poison into the prey's bloodstream that causes the animal to die. Once that happens, the Komodo dragon eats its prey. Komodo dragons do not always kill their prey, however. Sometimes they dine on an animal that is already dying or dead. After filling its stomach, a Komodo dragon spends some quality time basking in the sun.





Zebras are a common prey for lions.

Chapter Three

Savanna Predator: Lion King

Lions hunt a variety of different prey. Their prey includes smaller animals, such as rodents, and larger ones, such as baboons. They hunt **hoofed** animals like zebras and antelopes. They can even attack animals that are larger than they are, like water buffalo, hippopotamuses, elephants, and giraffes. They hunt these larger animals if the prey is young or sick and weak.

Lions hunt in groups. Together, they make a powerful team. When they spot their prey, they quietly hide nearby. Then they quickly jump out and run toward the animal. One lion leaps onto the prey and bites its neck until the animal dies. Then all the lions crowd around and compete to share the prey.

Lions eat this big meal right away. They eat leftovers for a few days after that. A grown male lion can eat up to 75 pounds of meat in one meal. Then he does not need to eat again for a whole week. After a successful hunt, the lions lazily sleep off their meal.

In every habitat around the world, predators and prey alike take part in the great circle of life. They demonstrate the amazing range of animals that wander the earth.

Glossary

burrow: hole or tunnel in the ground made by an animal.

electrical: having to do with electricity.

fin: thin, flat part that sticks out of the body of a fish and is used for guidance and movement through the water.

gill: organ or body part on fish and other sea creatures that helps them breathe oxygen in water.

habitat: natural environment where living things are found.

hoofed: having hooves on the feet. Examples of hoofed animals are horses and zebras.

predator: animal that survives by hunting and eating other animals.

prey: animal that is hunted and eaten by another animal.

snout: front of an animal's face, containing its nose and jaws.

target: something being attacked.

unsuspecting: not expecting or knowing about something that is going to happen.