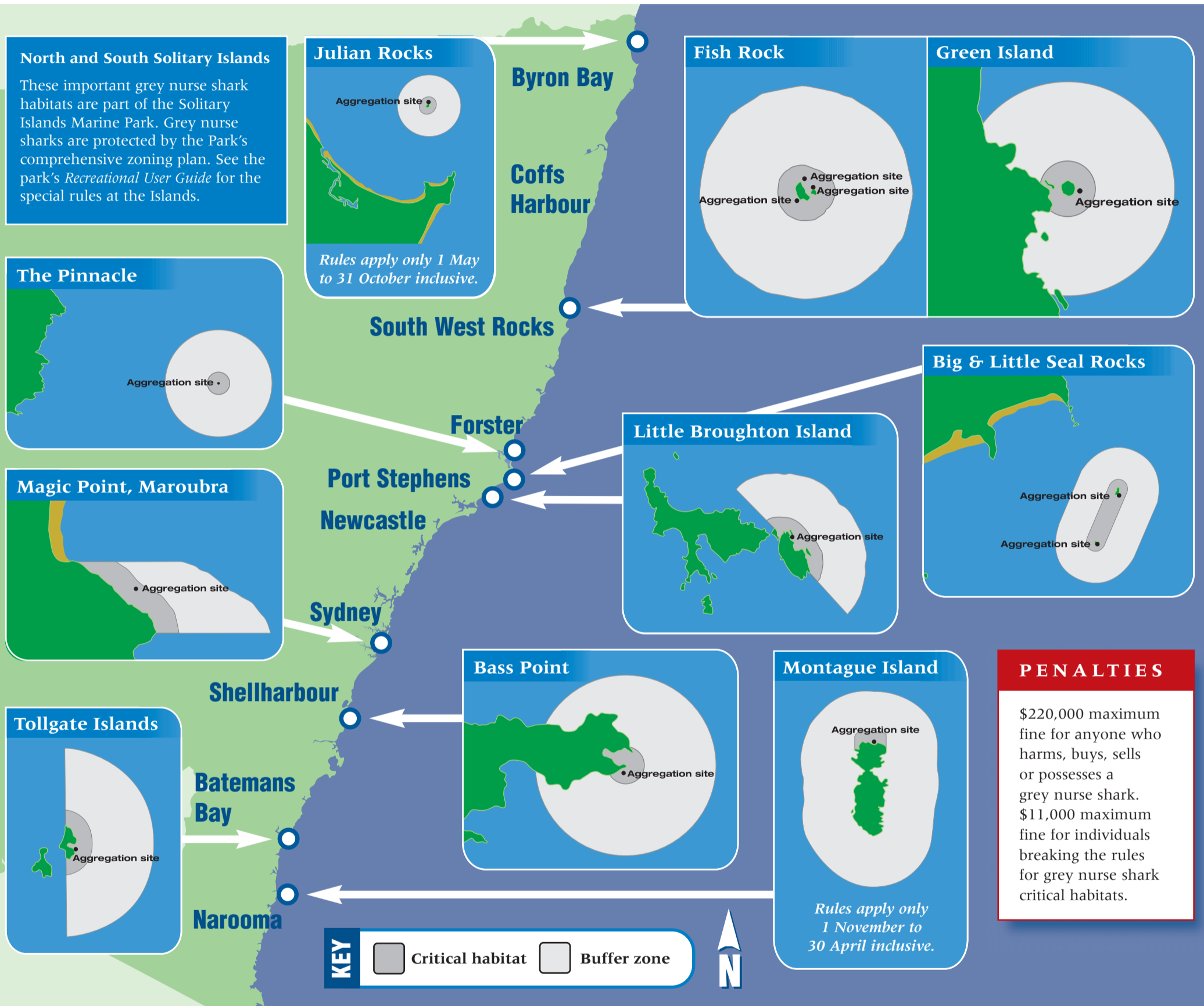


Grey Nurse Shark critical habitats



Grey nurse sharks roam over very large areas of the NSW coast, but are known to gather to feed, mate and pup at a small number of locations. Marine scientists have identified 10 sites, called critical habitats, which are vital to the survival of the grey nurse shark.



PENALTIES

\$220,000 maximum fine for anyone who harms, buys, sells or possesses a grey nurse shark.
 \$11,000 maximum fine for individuals breaking the rules for grey nurse shark critical habitats.

Rules in critical habitats

New rules for grey nurse shark critical habitats came into effect on 1 December 2002.

Critical habitat areas are 200 metres out from the relevant natural feature, with an additional 800-metre buffer zone.

Type of fishing	Critical habitat	Buffer zone
Anchored or moored using wire trace	No	No
Drop, drift or set line commercial fishing	No	No
Anchored or moored using bait	No	Yes
Anchored or moored using fly or artificial lure	Yes	Yes
Trolling or drifting using bait, fly or lure with or without wire trace	Yes	Yes
Rock and beach fishing without wire trace	Yes	Yes

Normal fishing rules, such as bag and size limits, continue to apply. Special spear fishing rules continue to apply at Julian Rocks and Fish Rock. Bushrangers Bay at Bass Point remains a sanctuary area. The maximum weight that can be directly attached to any fishing line in each 200-metre critical habitat area is 500 grams. Commercial line fishers are limited to using recreational fishing gear in each critical habitat and buffer zone.

Diving rules in critical habitats

The new rules for divers and snorkellers in each 200-metre grey nurse shark critical habitat area are:

- No scuba diving between sunset and sunrise;
- No blocking entrances to caves or gutters when the sharks are there;
- No feeding or touching the sharks;
- No chasing or harassing the sharks;
- No electronic shark repelling devices; and
- No underwater scooters.

New fishing and diving rules

An endangered species



The grey nurse shark is an endangered species under NSW and Commonwealth law.

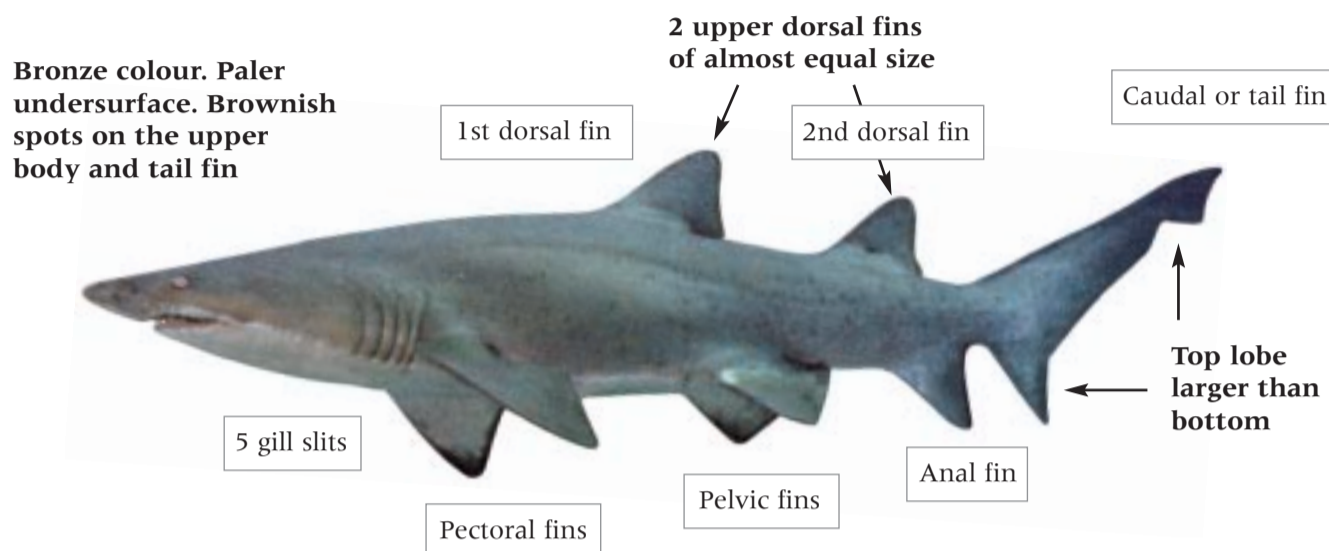
Despite their fierce appearance, grey nurse sharks are not known to be aggressive. They are a passive species with teeth designed for capturing prey such as fish, squid and some crustaceans.

Due to overfishing in recent decades, the numbers of grey nurse sharks in NSW waters have declined significantly. Today, grey nurse shark numbers are so low that they are in danger of becoming extinct.

The NSW Government is implementing a recovery plan to protect the grey nurse shark. This brochure explains the initiatives that are being taken and how you can help save the grey nurse shark.

Identifying a grey nurse shark

It is illegal to harm a grey nurse shark - so it's important that fishers and divers can distinguish grey nurse sharks from other sharks. The grey nurse shark's most distinctive feature is the similarity in size of the two upper dorsal fins.



Fishing for grey nurse shark is illegal

It is illegal to fish for grey nurse sharks. If you catch a grey nurse shark accidentally you must release it, causing the least possible harm.

Your questions answered

QA

How fishing can harm a shark

Q: Can fishing harm a grey nurse shark?

A: Yes. Grey nurse sharks will take baited hooks. Many sharks can be seen with harmful fishing gear, such as hooks, caught in their jaws and line trailing from their mouth and gills.

Q: Can a hook get lodged in a shark's jaw?

A: Before the new critical habitat rules, grey nurse sharks were often hooked by anglers using bait to fish for snapper, bream or mullet on or near the seabed. These demersal species live in the same environment as grey nurse sharks. A baited hook with a wire trace might allow the shark to be brought to the surface, but in most cases the line breaks, leaving the hook jammed in the shark.

Q: Are all line fishing methods harmful to the grey nurse shark?

A: No. For example, "trolling" targets fish closer to the surface such as kingfish and mackerel. Trolled hooks are not a danger to grey nurse sharks which are found in deeper waters.

Q: What is the most harmful fishing method for grey nurse sharks?

A: "Set lining". In 2002 more sharks were reported killed by commercial set lines than any other single fishing method. Set lines are unattended lines, often left overnight, with up to 10 baited hooks. If a grey nurse shark gets caught it can drag the line away, making it difficult for commercial fishers to recover their lines and release the shark.

Research to improve our knowledge

To get a better understanding of the grey nurse shark, NSW Fisheries has begun a tagging program. This will provide information about shark movements and the total population size.

Sharks are being tagged with a white numbered tag in both dorsal fins. If you see a tagged grey nurse shark please record the details and call (02) 4916 3888.

Recovery Plan: Your help is vital

The Grey Nurse Shark Recovery Plan can only succeed with the active support of everyone who uses our marine environment. Fishers and divers have already shown a great willingness to help save the grey nurse shark from extinction.

But there is more to be done. Please familiarise yourself with the appearance of the grey nurse shark, and follow the rules in the new grey nurse shark critical habitats.

For information please call 1300 550 474 or visit www.fisheries.nsw.gov.au.



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Protecting the Grey Nurse Shark

A GUIDE FOR FISHERS AND DIVERS

