



## Part 2

# Shark Conservation in Fernando de Noronha, Brazil

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**Report 2 of 3**



## Report 2

### What's happening in Fernando de Noronha?

Currently, the island has experienced a sharp increase in tourism. In 2022, it received approximately 149,000 visitors. This rise in tourism may interfere with shark behaviour. As shark populations continue to recover from past overfishing, sightings close to shore have become more frequent. The more people entering their habitat, the greater the likelihood of encounters—and, in rare cases, accidents.

In 2015 and again in 2022, there were two tiger shark incidents at Sueste beach. The beach was subsequently closed and later reopened with limited access for swimming with turtles in small groups of four. However, when tiger sharks were recorded again in December 2022, the beach was permanently closed (see Figure 1).



### Fieldwork

We conducted four interviews with residents of Fernando de Noronha: two researchers from the Sharks and Rays of Noronha project, a tour guide and project collaborator, and a former shark fisherman who is now the founder of the Shark Museum of Noronha.

The Sharks and Rays of Noronha project is built on three main pillars: scientific research, environmental education (including school outreach and community engagement), and ecotourism. The project works in partnership with local guides through training programmes to ensure consistent and accurate messaging.

The story of the former fisherman was particularly compelling. He is now the founder of the Shark Museum. His change in mindset occurred even before the fishing ban was enforced—he found that shark fishing was no longer economically viable. Although he used every part of the shark (crafting items from fins and vertebrae, producing vitamins from liver oil, and salting the meat for sale), he realised he would need to increase his catch to make it profitable, something he didn't feel was right. As a result, he created the Shark Museum as a tourism initiative.

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It was incredibly rewarding to hear his story and learn how he went from hunting sharks to conserving and honouring them through the museum.

These interviews provided valuable insight into the island's current reality and helped us understand the context and challenges facing the community.



### To achieve our goal

To meet our objectives, we used a combination of shark observation methods including snorkelling, drone-based identification, and land-based sightings. These allowed us to observe and record various shark behaviours across the island's beaches (see Figure 2):

At Sueste beach, where previous shark incidents occurred, we recorded a tiger shark capturing a green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), highlighting its role as a feeding ground for this species. The shark also acts as a population regulator—without predators, there would likely be an overpopulation of turtles and other species, disrupting the food web.

At Santo Antônio (a beach next to the port), we observed nurse sharks being fed by tourist boats and even witnessed a nurse shark rubbing itself against the seafloor.

At Conceição beach, we monitored the presence of one nurse shark and three lemon sharks while they were feeding.

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