



Jonathan Bird's Blue World

Episode 4 • The Shark and the Whale • Study Guide

Jonathan Bird's Blue World: *The Shark and the Whale* is a story exploring the reasons why Oceanic Whitetip sharks often seem to follow pods of pilot whales. In this adventure, Jonathan travels to Hawaii to search for pods of pilot whales being followed by the sharks. He then follows the sharks to see what they do and if there is any reasonable explanation for the sharks following the whales. What he finally observes is a revelation never before reported: the sharks are eating the feces of the whales. Apparently whale poop is a nutritious and readily available resource in the relative emptiness of the open ocean where these sharks live.

Objectives

1. Introduces viewers to two pelagic animals of the tropics—the pilot whale, a small toothed whale that lives in pods like dolphins, and the Oceanic Whitetip shark, a medium-sized pelagic shark often considered dangerous to people.
2. Reviews the theories on why the sharks follow the whales and presents strong evidence for a new, totally different theory.
3. Demonstrates that Oceanic Whitetip sharks are not as dangerous as people believe.
4. Shows social behavior among marine mammals.
5. Introduces the concept of pilotfish.

Questions for before watching the program

1. Why might a shark follow a pod of small whales? What if the whales are much bigger than the shark?
2. In the open ocean, what is there for a toothed whale to eat? What would sharks find to eat? Is there a lot of food in the open ocean?
3. Can whales see anything above water? How might they accomplish this?

Discussion for after watching the program

1. What is spyhopping?
2. What are some of the reasons that the sharks might be following the whales?
3. Sharks are typically considered *opportunistic* in their feeding habits. What does this mean? How was this demonstrated in the film? (Hint, the sharks left the whales when an opportunity presented itself.)
4. What role does the pilotfish play to the shark? What role does the shark play to the pilot whale? How are the roles similar?
5. What is a *pod*?