



Jonathan Bird's Blue World

Episode 6 • The Shark with the Tall Tail • Study Guide

The Thresher shark may very well be the strangest looking shark in the world, with a tail almost as long as its body. This shark is very rare, almost never seen by divers... until now. Jonathan Bird's Blue World: *The Shark with the Long Tail* explains how these elusive sharks come to a remote seamount in the Philippines every morning to be cleaned of parasites by small fish called wrasses. Using advanced diving technology, Jonathan visits the seamount hoping to get close enough to film this amazing behavior which has never been filmed before. His rebreather, which produces very few bubbles, makes him silent and stealthy, allowing him a front row seat to watch the sharks being cleaned. In an amazing stroke of luck, a manta ray also shows up at the cleaning station to provide added excitement!

Objectives

1. Introduces viewers to the Pelagic Thresher shark, one of the rarest sharks for divers to see in the wild.
2. Explains the concept of cleaner fish and the cleaning station.
3. Explains what a seamount is.
4. Illustrates how a seamount becomes a magnet for marine life.

Questions for before watching the program

1. Why might a shark have a tail as long as its body? If it were to make the shark swim faster, wouldn't all sharks have the same kind of tail?
2. Are sharks afraid of bubbles?
3. Where is the Philippines? Can you find it on a map or globe?
4. What is a seamount?

Discussion for after watching the program

1. What are Thresher sharks doing at the seamount?
2. Why would a shark want to allow itself to be cleaned by a fish? What's in it for the fish?
3. Why did Jonathan use a rebreather instead of normal scuba gear?
4. Do the sharks feed at the seamount?
5. Do manta rays feed at the seamount? How do the mantas feed?
6. Describe a seamount.
7. What do biologists think Threshers do with their long tail?