

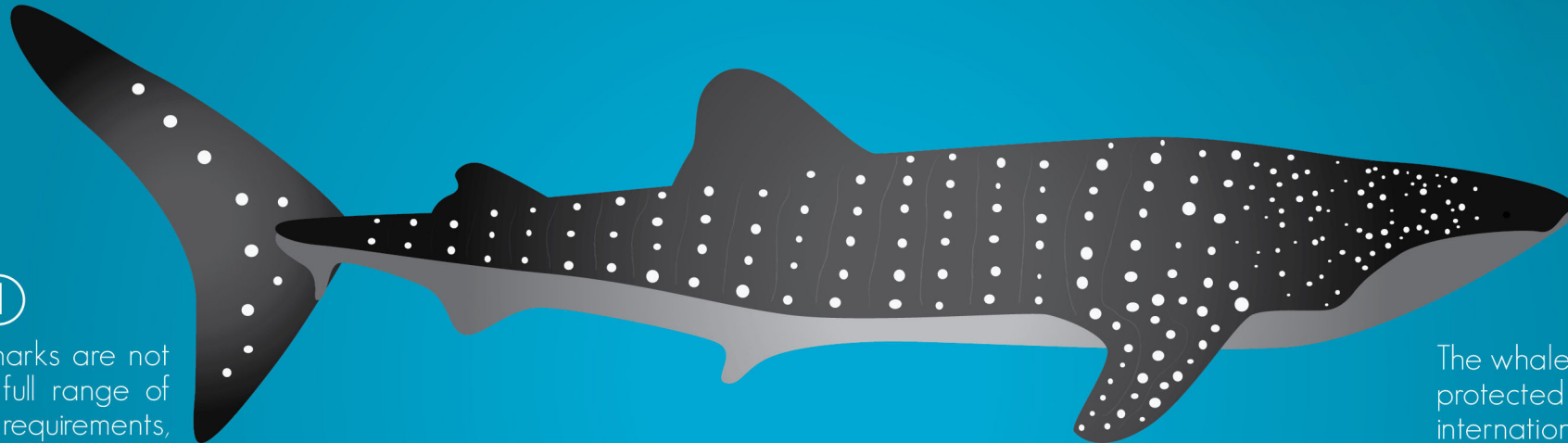
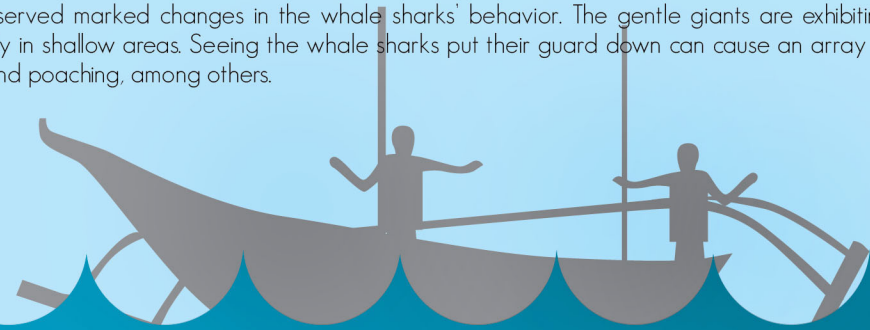
5 REASONS WHY FEEDING OF WHALE SHARKS SHOULD STOP

The coastal community in Oslob, Cebu, has been intentionally feeding whale sharks in shallow waters so that tourists can interact with them. Since the news hit mainstream media in late 2011, Oslob has become a major tourist attraction in Cebu.

As the hype escalated, so did the concern of scientists and environmental advocates. Meetings with government officials were held and research-based guidelines were offered, which primarily discouraged feeding the whale sharks. Such recommendations fell on deaf ears as the practice of feeding the whale sharks by hand continues.

Tourism built around the natural environment is not an easy business. Lawmakers have to be extra careful in making sound policies that are based on how the ecosystem works to ensure the sustainability of the resources and, consequently, of the industry.

In less than a year, researchers have already observed marked changes in the whale sharks' behavior. The gentle giants are exhibiting unusual, less energetic behavior and feed vertically in shallow areas. Seeing the whale sharks put their guard down can cause an array of problems: net entanglement, cuts from propellers, and poaching, among others.



1

The whale sharks are not getting their full range of nutritional requirements, which may affect their growth and reproduction.

2

Whale sharks naturally do not spend a lot of time at the surface or in shallow waters.

3

Whale sharks are migratory species. They're not supposed to stay in one site for prolonged periods of time.

4

Conditioning whale sharks to approach boats can make them more susceptible to injuries and poaching.

5

The whale shark's welfare is protected by local and international laws. Anything that could harm them needs to be banned.