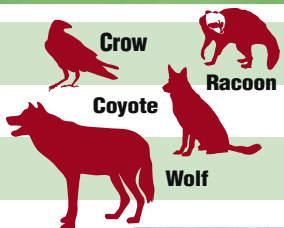
Science Matters

A 10-foot (3 m) hammerhead shark passes under a swimmer near Miami.

Coastal cities attract big predators

The world's coastlines are rapidly urbanizing, and how increased human presence may impact species living in the ocean is not fully understood.

Wildlife and urban habitats



Urban exploiters: Species that thrive in cities, often rely on garbage for food

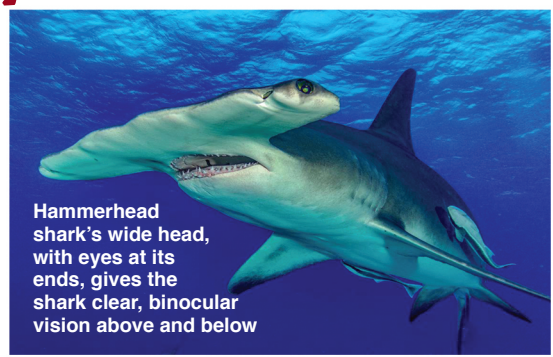
Urban adapters: Make some use of city areas but largely rely on natural areas

Urban avoiders: Sensitive to human disturbance, stay away from humans

Beach city's urban sharks

A new study tracked the movements of bull, nurse and great hammerhead sharks near Miami, Florida

Rather than being repelled by city noise, chemicals and lights, the sharks lingered nearby, often close to shore, at all times of day



Hammerhead shark's wide head, with eyes at its ends, gives the shark clear, binocular vision above and below

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Source: University of Miami Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science; Marine Ecology Progress Series journal; TNS Photos
Graphic: Helen Lee McComas, Tribune News Service

Hammerhead sharks (there are nine species) evolved after the end of the Age of Dinosaurs 66 million years ago

Great hammerhead shark Largest ever recorded was 20 ft.