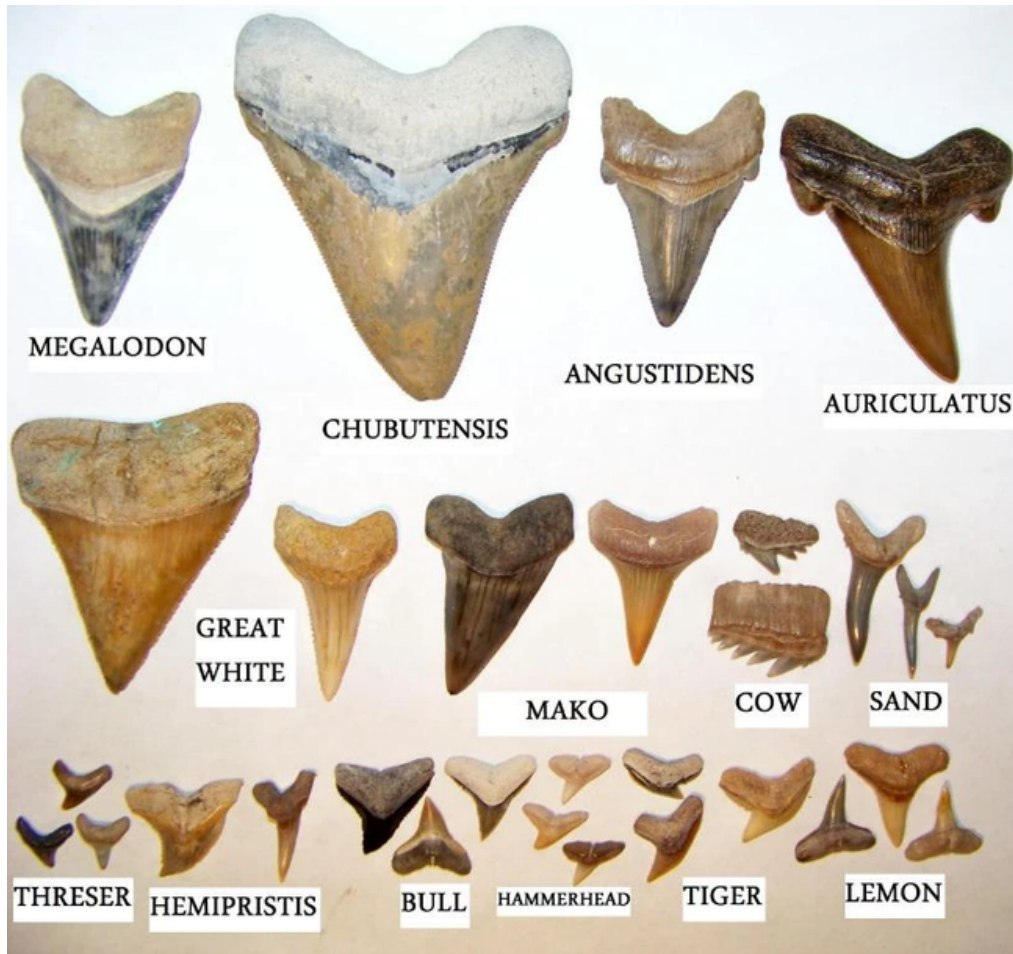


Shark Tooth Fossil



Since shark skeletons are composed of cartilage instead of bone, often the only parts of the shark to survive as fossils are teeth. The most ancient types of sharks date back to 450 million years ago during the Late Ordovician period, and they are mostly known from their fossilized teeth. The most common, however, are from the Cenozoic (65 million years ago). Sharks continually shed their teeth, and some sharks can shed approximately 35,000 teeth in a lifetime.

Origin Of The Name

The oldest known records of fossilized shark teeth being found, are by a man named Pliny the Elder, in which he believed that these triangular objects fell from the sky during lunar eclipses. According to Renaissance accounts, large, triangular fossil teeth often found embedded in rocky formations were once believed to be petrified tongues, called tongue stones or glossopetrae, of dragons and snakes. Glossopetrae, were commonly thought to be able to be a remedy or cure for various poisons and toxins, including helping in the treatment of snake bites. Due to this ingrained belief, many noblemen and royalty wore these "tongue stones" pendants or kept them in their pockets as good-luck charms.

This interpretation was corrected in 1667 by a Danish naturalist Nicolaus Steno, who recognized them as ancient shark teeth and famously produced a depiction of a shark's head bearing such teeth. He mentioned his findings in a book, *The Head of a Shark Dissected*, which also contained an illustration of a *C. megalodon* tooth, previously considered to be a tongue stone.

Interesting Facts

A tooth become a fossil when it is buried in sediment (or other material) soon after being lost from a shark's mouth. The sediment precludes oxygen and harmful bacteria from reaching the tooth and destroying it. The general fossilization process varies greatly depending on the exact situation. In general it takes approximately 10,000 years for a tooth to become a true fossil.

The shape of a shark's tooth depends on its diet; those that feed on mollusks and crustaceans have dense flattened teeth for crushing, those that feed on fish have needle-like teeth for gripping, and those that feed on larger prey such as mammals have pointed lower teeth for gripping and triangular upper teeth with serrated edges for cutting.

C. megalodon teeth are the largest of any shark and are among the most sought after types of shark teeth in the world. This shark lived roughly about 25 million years ago. The s largest teeth can reach up to 14 inches. These teeth are in extremely high demand by collectors and private investors, and they can fetch steep prices.

Where Is It Found

Shark teeth cannot be collected from any type of rock. Any fossils, including fossil shark teeth, are preserved in sedimentary rocks.

Fossilized shark teeth can often be found in or near river bed banks, sand pits, and beaches. Phosphate pits, containing mostly fossil bones and teeth, or kaoline pits, are ideal places to look for fossil shark teeth. One of the most notable phosphate mines is in Central Florida, Polk County, and is known as Bone Valley. Near New Caledonia, up until the practice was banned, fishermen and commercial vessels used to dredge the sea floor for megalodon teeth

What Do We Do With It

Fossilized shark teeth are commonly used as a pendant and worn around the neck.

In Oceania and America, shark teeth were commonly used for tools, especially weapons such as clubs and daggers, but also to carve wood and as tools for food preparation. For example, various weapons edged with shark teeth were used by the Native Hawaiians, who called them leiomano. Some types were reserved for royalty. The Guaitaca (Weittaka) of coastal Brazil tipped their arrows with shark teeth. The remains of shark tooth-edged weapons, as well as chert replicas of shark teeth, have been found in the Cahokia mounds of the upper Mississippi River valley, more than 1,000 km (620 mi) from the ocean. It is reported that the rongorongo tablets of Easter Island were first shaped and then inscribed using a hafted shark tooth.