


# A SPEEDY FISH



A sailfish hunts a bait ball of sardines. Usually sailfish hunt in groups, but this one appears to be alone.

**Sailfish are the fastest fish in the sea and are great hunters.**

## General Information

Have you ever seen a sailfish zip through the water really fast? Or see it surround a bait ball of tiny sardines? They are truly amazing sights. Sailfish are unquestionably the fastest swimming fish in the sea. They are also great hunters and are very hard to catch. Would you like to learn more about these fascinating creatures?

Sailfish, the state saltwater fish of Florida, are very fast. Above all, they can swim at speeds of 68 mph (110 km). That's as fast as a cheetah! Also, these fish can swim 100 meters in 4.8 seconds. How's that for a fish called "the wolf of the sea?" What's more, they can swim more than 4 times faster than Michael Phelps; an Olympic swimmer who has won a lot of gold medals. Their growth is fascinating, too. For example, sailfish can reach 4-5 feet in just 1 year.



A sailfish jumps out of the water. Some people say they do this for no apparent reason. There is a joke that says they do this because they have no fingers.

As amazing as their speed is, their body is disagreeably as amazing. They have a huge dorsal fin called a sail on their back. When it is fully extended, it is twice as tall as its body! Some sailfish have white markings on their sail.

Sailfish can change colors quickly. This function is controlled by the sailfish's nervous system, the system that controls their emotions and touch. Sailfish also have 20 vertical blue bars on its sides.

Sailfish live in the warmer sections of all the oceans in the world. They are carnivorous animals that eat sardines, mackerel, ballyhoo (a type of fish), and squid. In other words, sailfish eat an assortment of fish but don't eat vegetables. Unfortunately, overfishing has decreased the number of sailfish in the wild, even though they are very hard to catch. In fact, it can take 5 hours to catch a sailfish and, if you're in a kayak, you can get pulled 11 miles out to sea. Also, sailfish can bite through a fishing line as if it was butter and pull it out 300 feet in 3 seconds.

Sailfish also migrate south for the winter. They are famous for jumping out of the water and doing acrobatics. Wouldn't it be cool to see that?

As mentioned earlier, sailfish are very fast. But what makes them so fast?

## **Speedy Fish**

Sailfish have some tricks that help them speed through the water. For example, sailfish can fold their huge sail like a fan and put some of their other fins into

shallow slits in their bodies. Also, a sailfish's bill creates low resistance flow with the water. In other words, a sailfish's bill makes the water not "fight against" the sailfish. Due to a sailfish's huge amount of white muscle, sailfish swim very fast but cannot sustain that speed for as long as they would if they didn't have that white muscle. Their sails and pelvic fins help sailfish steer and turn. But what really makes sailfish so fast? Their huge tail does. It can beat many times each second. Wow!

## **Hunting**

Sailfish are also very good hunters. They use their huge dorsal fin to steer schools of fish into a tighter ball. To make their prey easier to catch, they drive them to the surface where they can't escape. Sailfish change positions to surround their prey, which makes them even easier to catch. Then they use their bill to stun and wound individual sardines. Next, they take turns eating fish from the bait ball. Sailfish also use their bill as a skewer to catch prey, an amazing skill that helps them hunt. Sailfish can scare prey by opening their sail abruptly to stop as if they hit the breaks on a car. As a result of this sneaky maneuver, a sailfish's hunting power doubles. Sailfish can also confuse prey. To do this, sailfish can turn their body light blue with yellowish stripes when excited. In addition to that, sailfish can use camouflage, or blending in to their surroundings, to make it easier to ambush and surprise prey. Their underside is

light, so when you look at a sailfish from below, it blends in with the sunlight-lit waters above. Their upper side is dark, so when you look at a sailfish from above, it blends in with the dark waters below. Sailfish sure have a lot of ways to be good hunters!

In conclusion, sailfish are amazing creatures. They are fast hunting machines with muscles like a boxer. If you ever see a sailfish hunting down a bait ball of sardines, or zipping through the water at speeds of 68 mph, be sure to savor it. And if you catch one, remember to release it so these wonderful creatures don't get endangered of dying out or becoming extinct. Sailfish are truly fascinating creatures. Who knows if they will grow more amazing in the future?