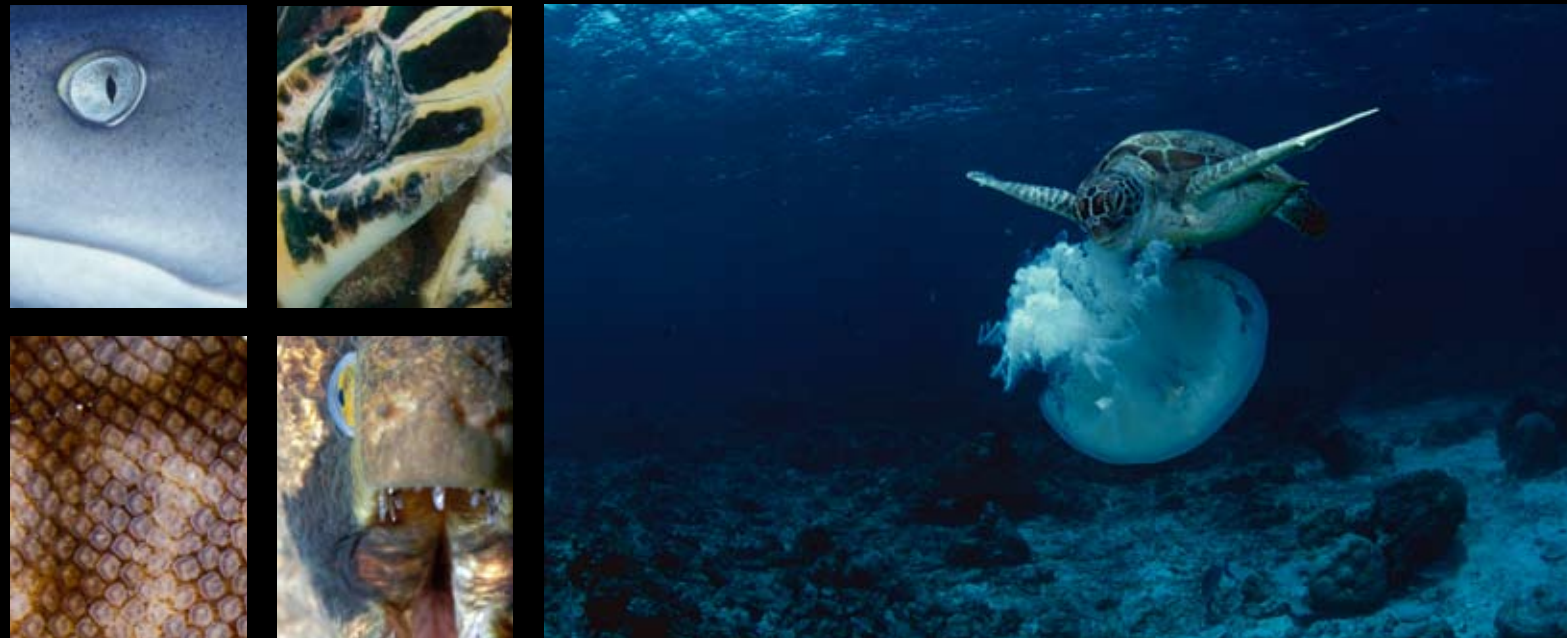


# Predator

By picking off the weak, old, and diseased, predators control the numbers of their prey and uphold evolution's ruthless laws of survival.



Predators rely on capturing and eating other animals to survive, and there are many ways of eating and being eaten. Nudibranchs have chemical sensors for tracking down other sea slugs or sessile animals, which they engulf in slow motion. Other invertebrates, such as giant octopuses, use their huge, flexible bodies to smother the reef, probing for crustaceans or small fish with their long arms. Their cousins, the cuttlefish, have spike-like tentacles for spearing prey at

blinding speeds, while mantis shrimps have arms equipped with either lethal spines or bulky clubs, which they employ to seize or smash their prey.

The senses are vital for all predators. Sharks, for example, are able to pick up electrical signals from the muscles of animals, even if their quarry is buried beneath the sand. In fact, the bizarre head of the hammerhead shark is thought to increase the sensitivity and accuracy of its electric-field sensory system.

△ A green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) devours a common jellyfish off the coast of Sipadan.  
▷ The tiger shark (*Galeocerdo cuvier*) is an apex predator that usually hunts at night.

Many predators actively hunt for prey, while others lie in wait, their bodies camouflaged against the reef. For some, stillness and patience are key, while for others speed is paramount – frogfish, for example, have the fastest recorded feeding action of any known fish.

