

# ***AMERICAN SCIENTIST***

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## THE COVER

*A snorkeler off the coast of Isla Mujeres, Mexico, dives to get a close-up shot of a whale shark (Rhincodon typus). Despite its gaping mouth, this filter-feeding shark poses no threat to the diver. The whale shark population is thought to be in decline, but much of the creature's behavior is still poorly known. In "Social Media Monitors the Largest Fish in the Sea" (pages 116-123), Tim K. Davies describes the potential for monitoring whale sharks using tourists' photographs shared via social media. Because every whale shark has a unique pattern of spots, the photos can divulge a particular shark's location over time. That information can then be used to track migration patterns and estimate population numbers. (Photograph by Luis Javier Sandoval Alvarado, Getty Images.)*