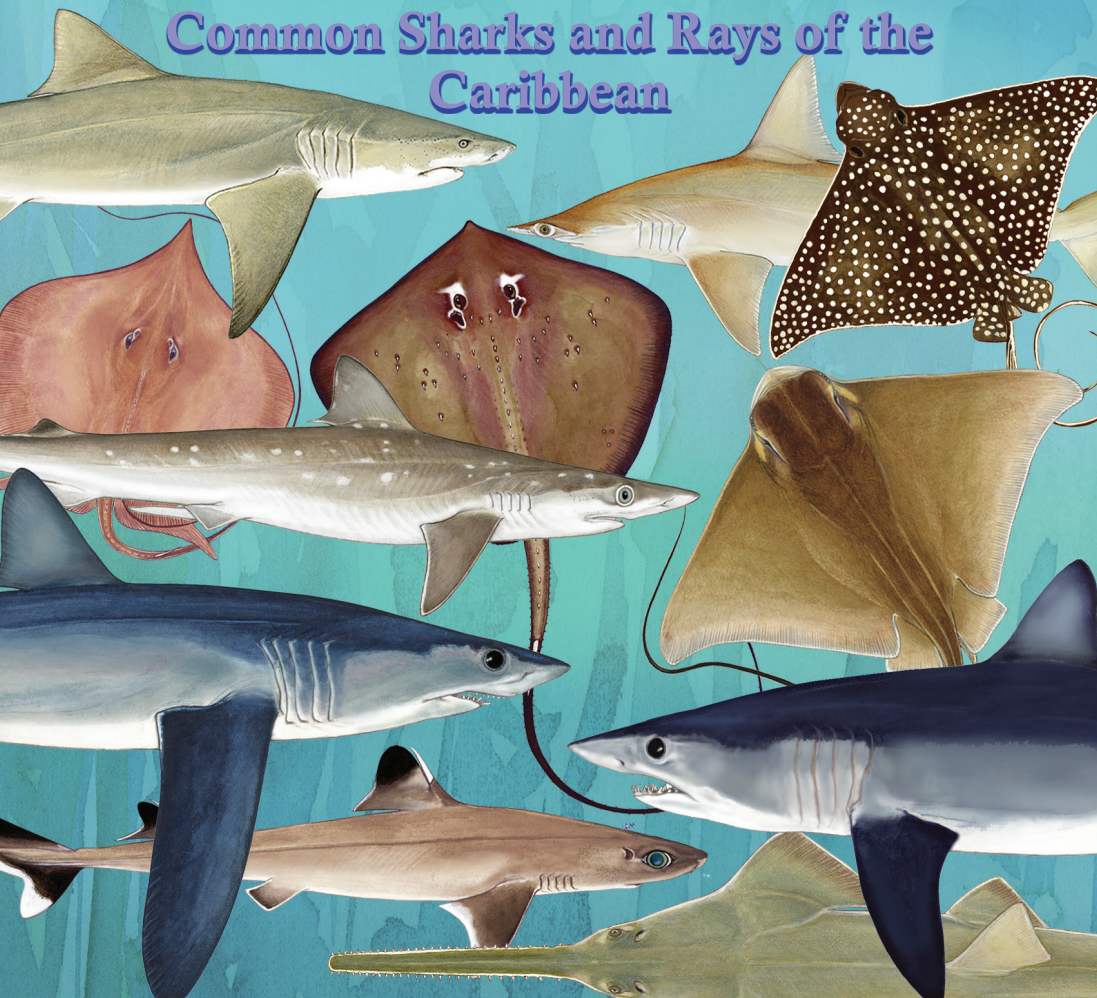
Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Identification Guide to Common Sharks and Rays of the Caribbean



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This guide was prepared under the "*CITES-FAO collaboration on immediate actions in support of the implementation of CITES listings of sharks and manta rays*" project and developed in close collaboration with the FishFinder Programme of the Marine and Inland Fisheries Branch, Fisheries Department, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United nations (FAO).

It includes a selection of shark and ray species occurring in the Wider Caribbean Region, that is the waters of the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and the waters of the Atlantic Ocean adjacent thereto. In total, 41 shark and 20 ray species are included. These species were selected because of their relevance to commercial fisheries or vulnerability to exploitation due to their life history characteristics. Of these, 29 shark and 9 ray species are presented in a full species card and depicted with a colour illustration and photo. Short accounts of 12 shark and 11 ray species that are less common in the region and could be misidentified with more common species, are also included.

This guide is intended to help fishery workers collecting catch data in the field in the identification of the sharks and rays they might encounter for the specific purpose of improving the quality of catch and landings data. The guide is expected to be useful also for fisheries inspectors, observers and enforcement officers of the navy, coastguard and customs.

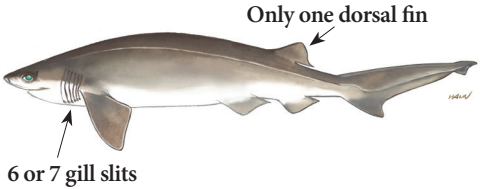
FishFinder Programme, Marine and Inland Fisheries Branch (FIAF). Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy.

Website: www.fao.org/fishery/fishfinder/en

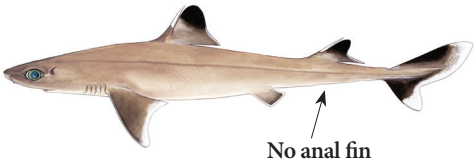
Email: FishFinder@fao.org

GUIDE TO ORDERS INCLUDED IN THIS GUIDE

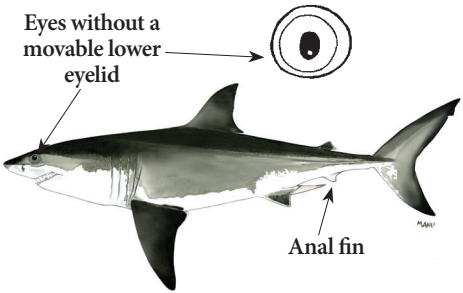
The shark and ray species included in this guide belong to nine Orders and sixteen Families. The species cards are colour coded by Order. The user can check the caught specimen against the guide below and follow the colour code or page numbers to reach the species cards.



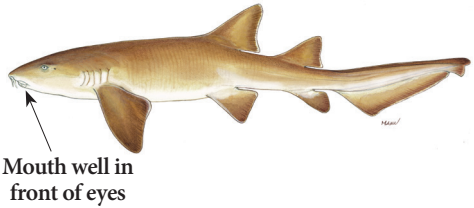
HEXANCHIFORMES – Pages 10 and 11



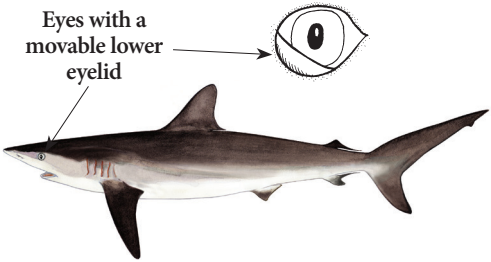
SQUALIFORMES – Pages 12 and 13



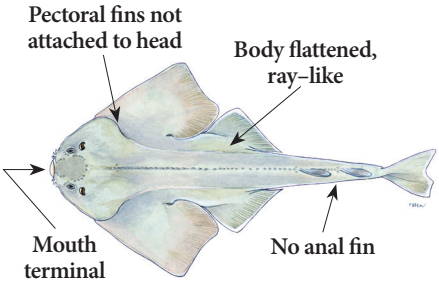
LAMNIFORMES – Pages 14 to 19



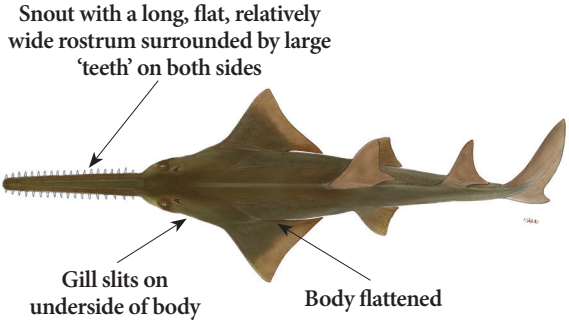
ORECTOLOBIFORMES – Pages 20 and 21



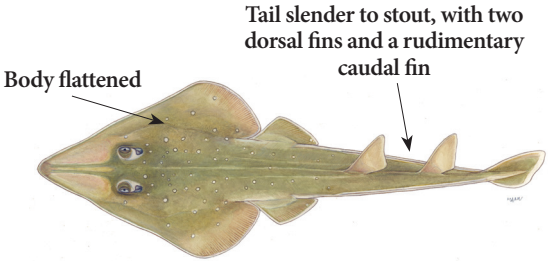
CARCHARHINIFORMES – Pages 22 to 58



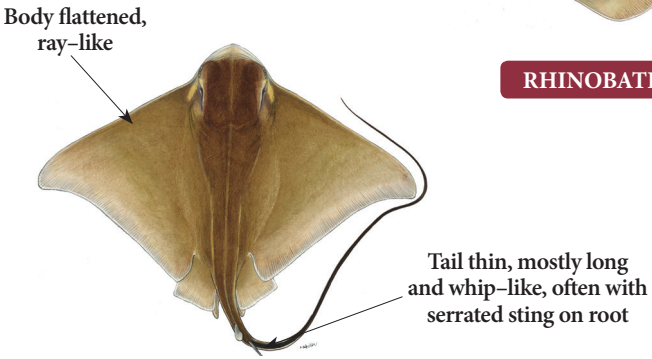
SQUATINIFORMES – Page 59



PRISTIFORMES – Pages 60 and 61



RHINOBATIFORMES – Pages 62 and 63



MYLIOBATIFORMES – Pages 64 to 75

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Family name

Scientific name and Autorship

FAO name in English, French and Spanish

FAO 3-alpha code

CITES listing (see page 9)

Scientific illustration and field marks

Species size: maximum (Max.), male ♂ and female ♀ maturity (Mat.), and birth

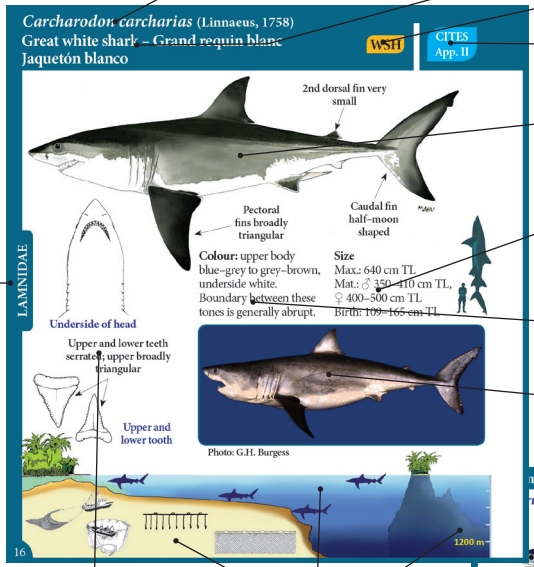
Coloration

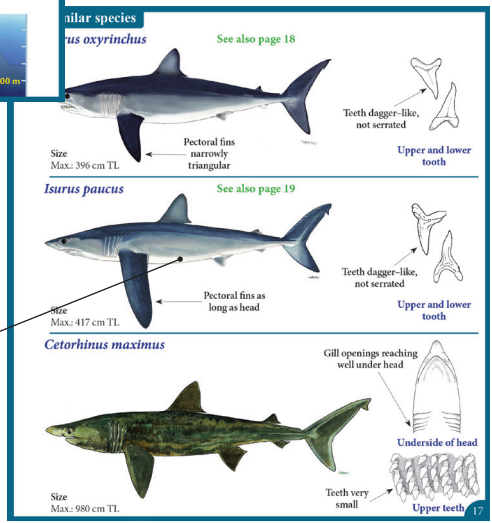
Photo of freshly caught specimen

Other helpful details for identification

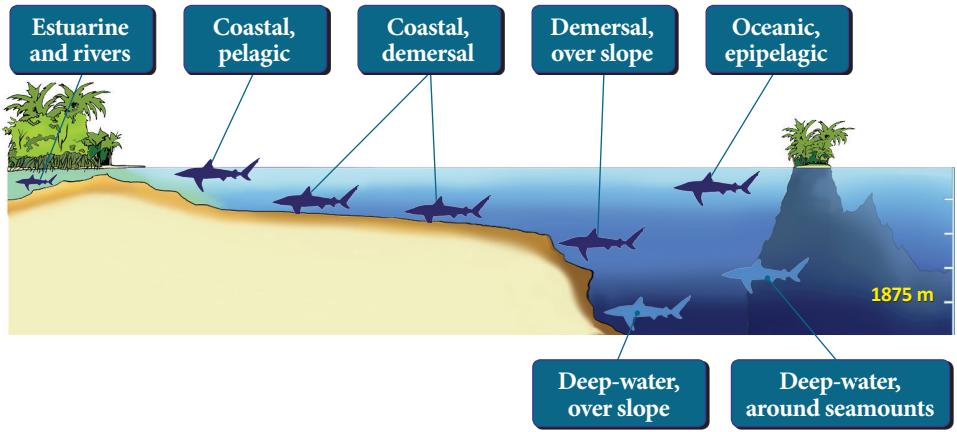
Bio-ecology, fishing methods and maximum depth

Similar species occurring in the area showing main differences with the species on the left card

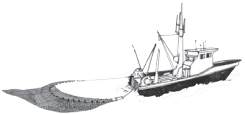




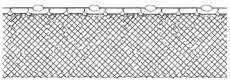
HABITAT



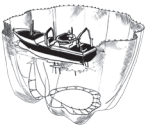
FISHING METHODS



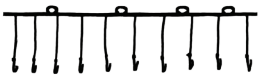
Bottom trawl



Gillnets



Purse seine

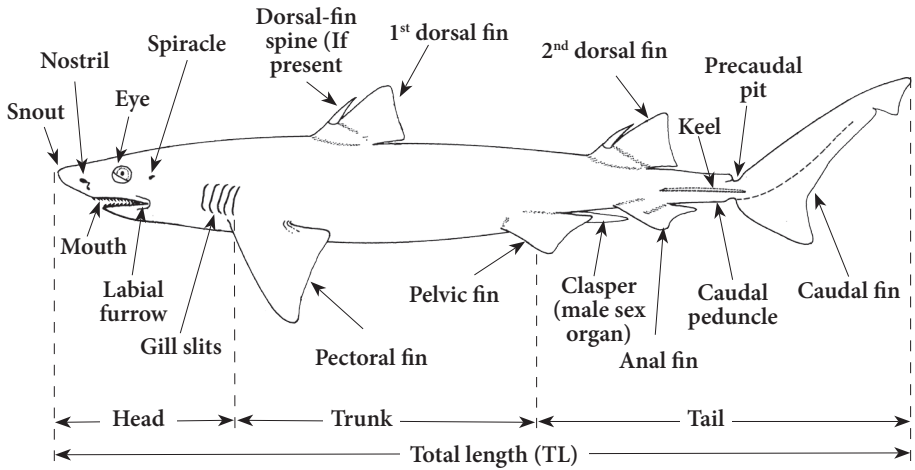


Longlines

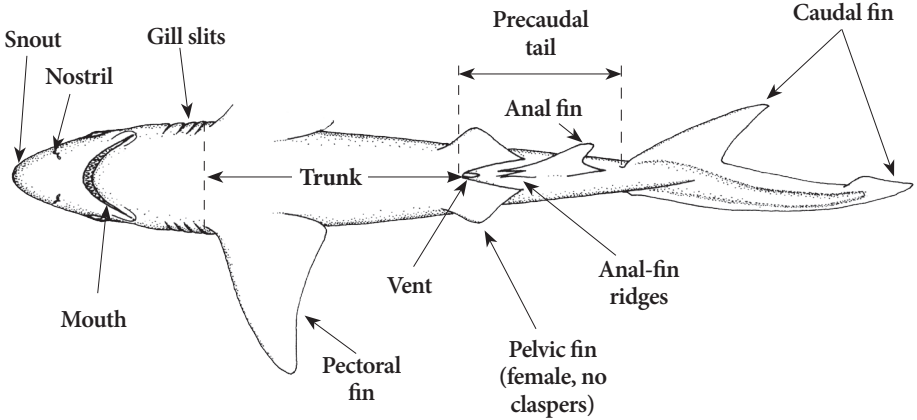
Hook-and-line

Harpoon

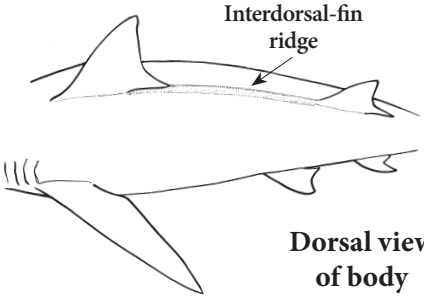
GUIDE OF EXTERNAL TERMINOLOGY OF SHARKS



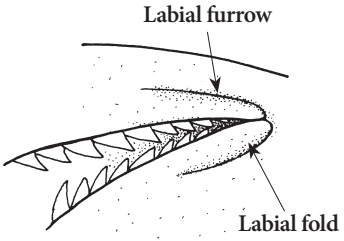
Lateral view



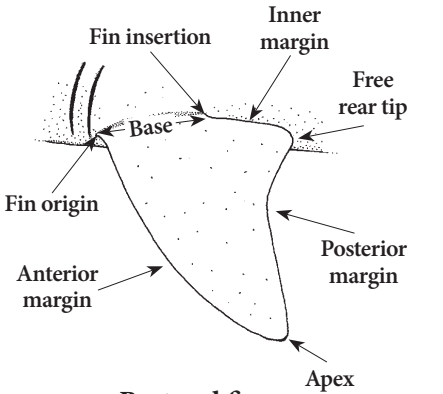
Ventral view



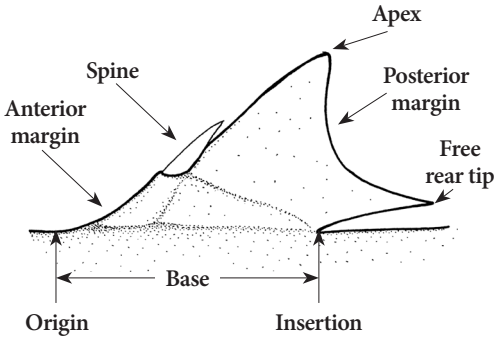
Dorsal view of body



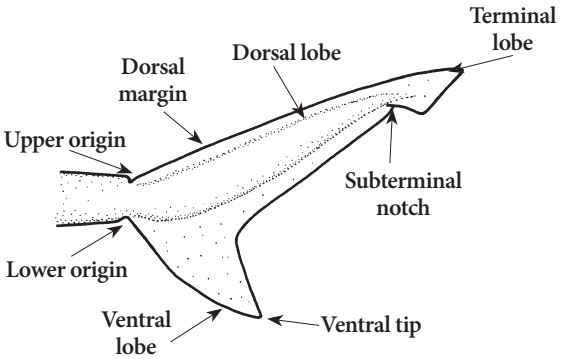
Mouth corner



Pectoral fin

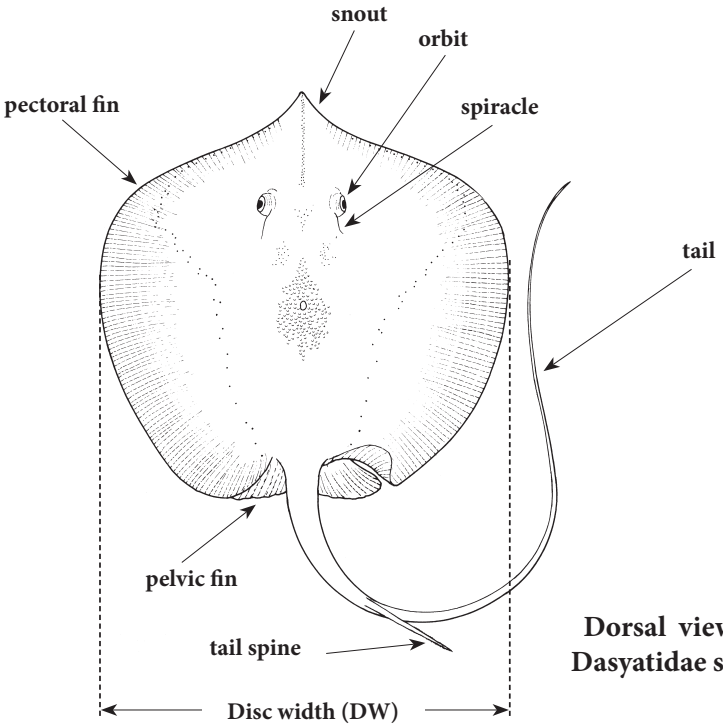


Dorsal fin

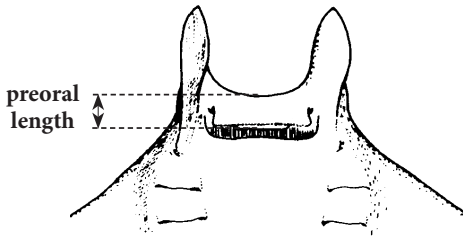


Caudal fin

GUIDE OF EXTERNAL TERMINOLOGY OF RAYS



Dorsal view of a Dasyatidae species



Underside of head of a *Mobula* species

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international agreement between governments aimed at protecting species of wild fauna and flora from overexploitation through international trade.

A specimen of a CITES-listed species may be imported into or exported (or re-exported) from a State party to the Convention only if the appropriate document has been obtained and presented for clearance at the port of entry or exit. The species covered by CITES are listed in three Appendices, according to the degree of protection they need.

Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances (i.e. research).

Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival. Countries will only allow trade in specimens of these species once the Scientific Authority of the State of export has advised that 'such export will not be detrimental to the survival of that species'. These 'non-detriment findings' (NDF's) guarantee that exports of products from listed species covered by the NDF have not harmed wild populations or ecosystems.

Appendix III includes species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade.

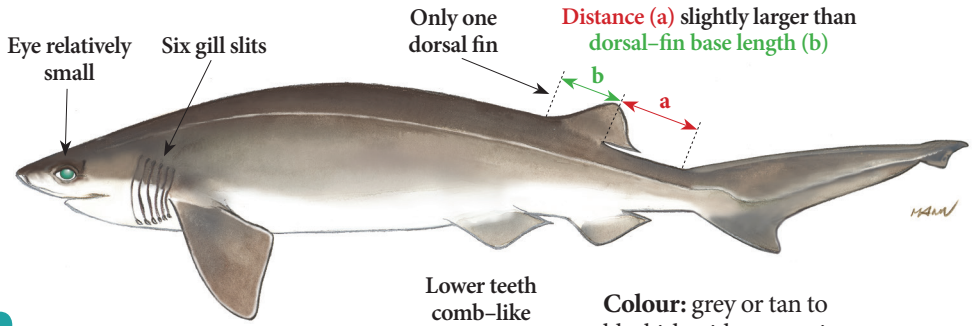
HOW TO SAFELY RELEASE SHARKS

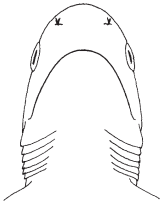
The biological characteristic of sharks and rays render them very vulnerable to heavy exploitation and many species are already considered to be under threat of extinction. Considering this, it is important to ensure that sharks and rays that are released alive, survive the stress of capture and do not die shorty after being released. Also, it is important for fishers to handle and release sharks and rays without risking injury to themselves.

- The first recommendation is to make sure that everyone involved knows his or her role during the release, to increase safety for fish and fishers.
- It is very important to use circle hooks rather than J hooks. Since circle hooks usually embed in the fish's jaw rather than the throat or stomach, they decrease life-threatening injuries.
- Non-stainless steel hooks are also recommended because if left in the fish, they will eventually corrode allowing fish to heal and continue to live healthy lives.
- Minimizing fight times and keeping fish in the water while removing hooks also help to increase survival rates.
- Do not use gaffs to secure sharks, and avoid lifting fish out of the water.
- Use a de-hooking tool if possible. This avoids risk of being bitten during hook removal.
- Resuscitate sharks before release, by pulling them slowly while in the water so that oxygen goes through their gills.

Hexanchus griseus (Bonnaterre, 1788)
Bluntnose sixgill shark – Requin griset
Cañabota gris

SBL

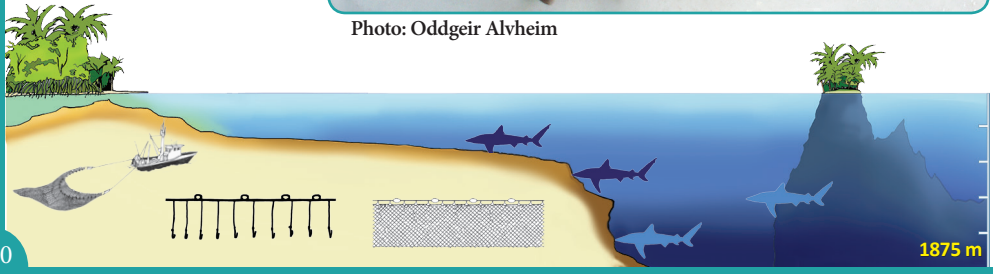




Colour: grey or tan to blackish with a conspicuous lighter lateral line. Underside often lighter.

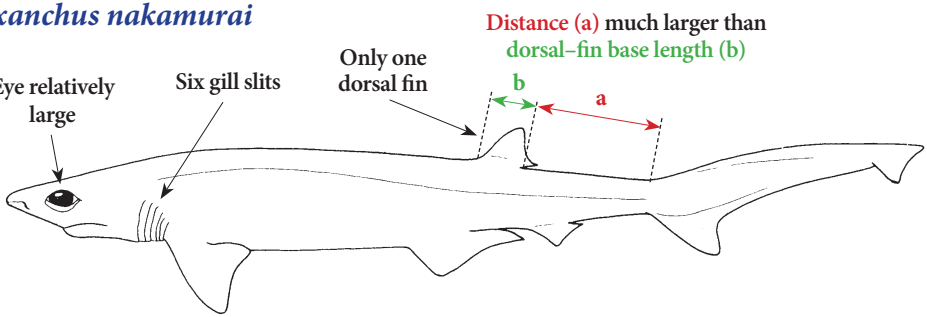
Size
Max.: 482 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 309 cm TL
♀ 421 cm TL
Birth: 65 cm TL

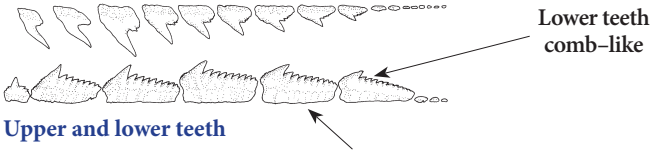
Photo: Oddgeir Alvheim



Similar species

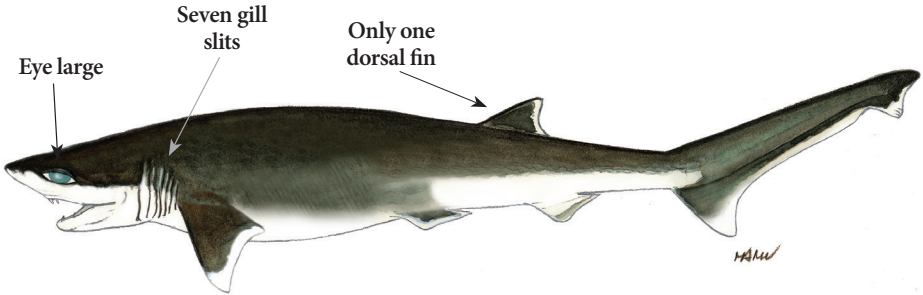
Hexanchus nakamurai

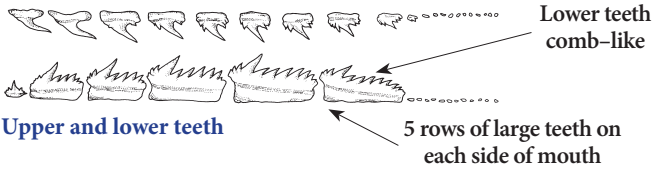




Size
Max.: 180 cm TL

Heptranchias perlo

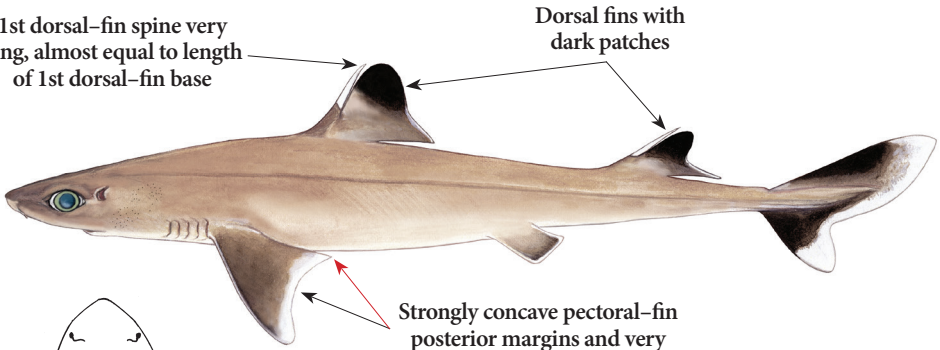


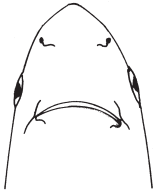


Size
Max.: 139 cm TL

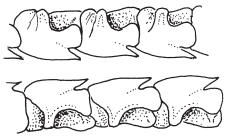
Squalus cubensis Howell-Rivero, 1936
Cuban dogfish – Aiguillat cubain
Galludo cubano

QUC





Underside of head

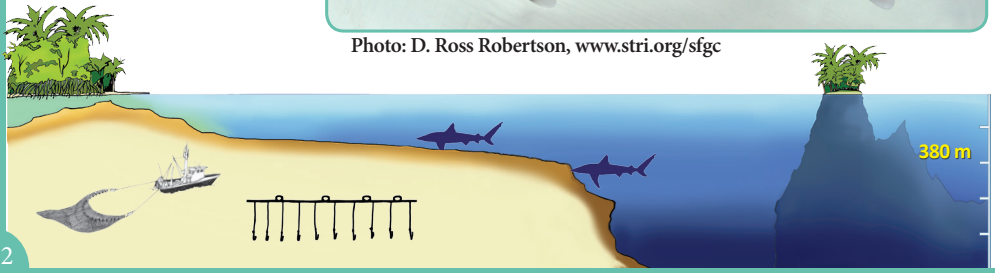


Upper and lower teeth

Colour: upper body brown to grey; white margins on pectoral fins and posterior edge of caudal fin.

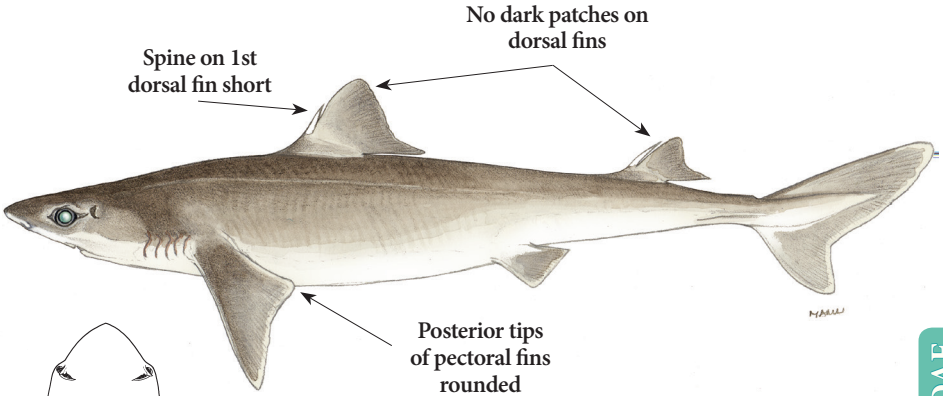
Size
Max.: 110 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ and ♀ ≤ 50 cm TL
Birth: unknown

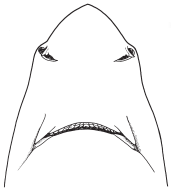
Photo: D. Ross Robertson, www.stri.org/sfgc



Squalus mitsukurii Jordan and Snyder, 1903
Shortspine spurdog – Aiguillat épinette
Galludo espinilla

QUK

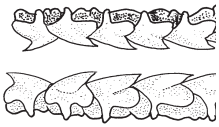




Underside of head

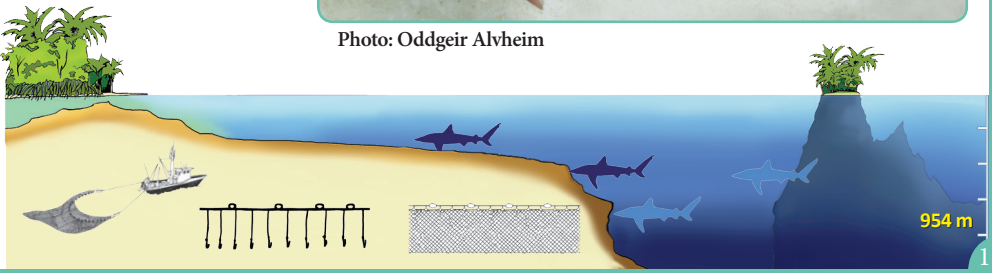
Colour: upper body grey to brown; pectoral fins and posterior edge of caudal fin with thin white margins.

Size
Max.: 125 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 47–85 cm TL
♀ 50–100 cm TL
Birth: 21–30 cm TL



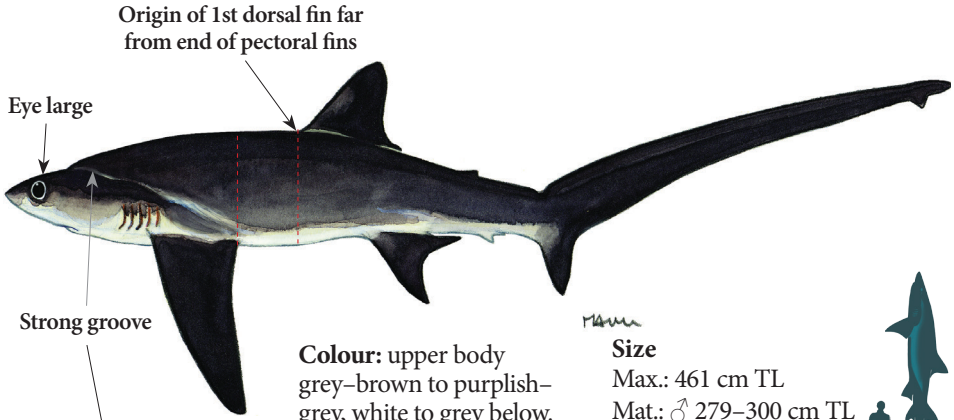
Upper and lower teeth

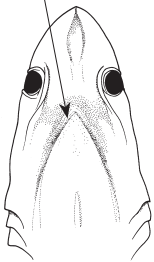
Photo: Oddgeir Alvheim



Alopias superciliosus (Lowe, 1841)
Bigeye thresher – Renard à gros yeux
Zorro ojón

BTH





Dorsal view of head

Colour: upper body grey–brown to purplish–grey, white to grey below. No white patches above pectoral or pelvic–fin bases.

Size
Max.: 461 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 279–300 cm TL
♀ 294–355 cm TL
Birth: 100–140 cm TL

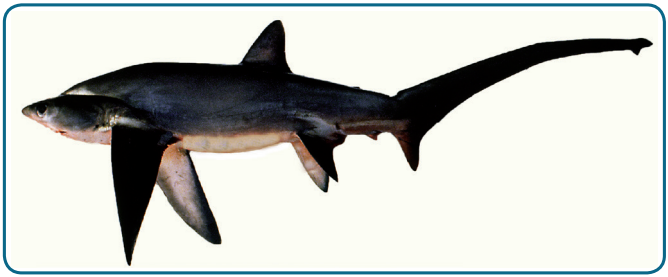
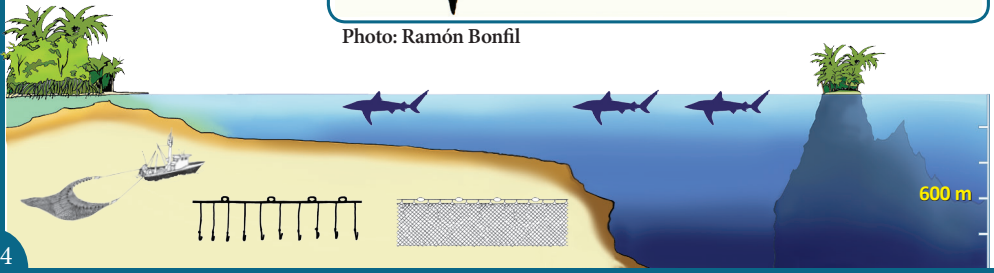
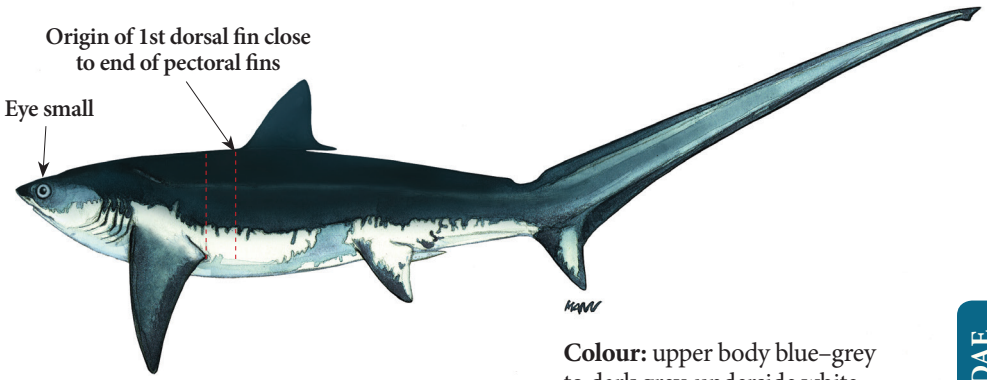


Photo: Ramón Bonfil



Alopias vulpinus (Bonnaterre, 1788)
Thresher – Renard
Zorro

ALV



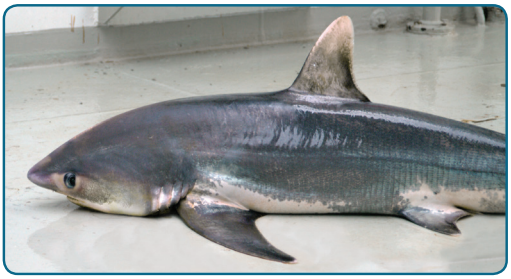
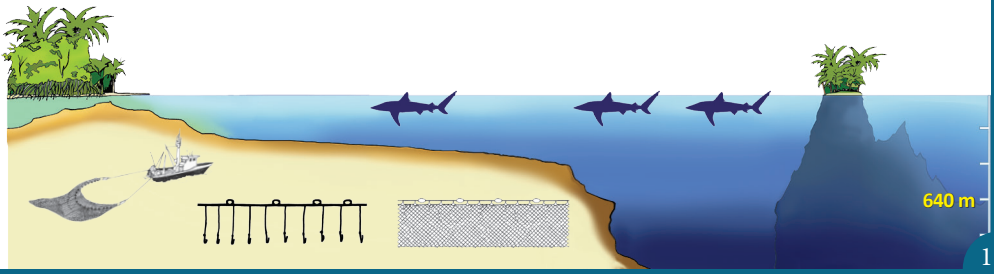


Photo: Oddgeir Alvheim

Colour: upper body blue–grey to dark grey, underside white. Noticeable white patches above pectoral and pelvic–fin bases extending from ventral area.

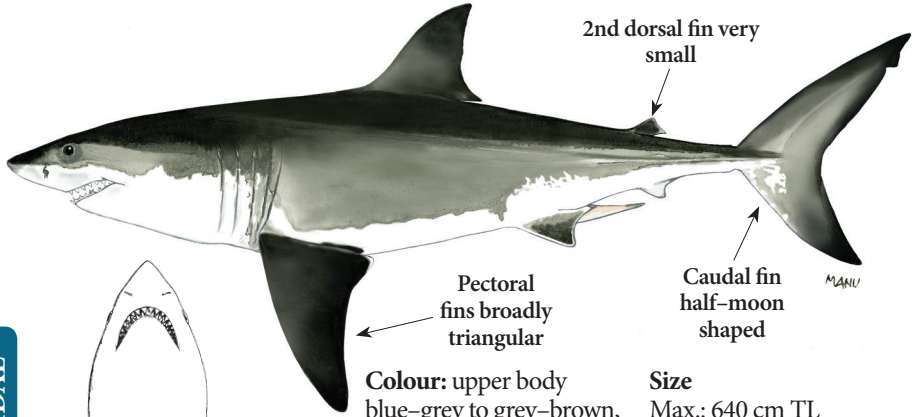
Size
Max.: 573 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 314 cm TL
♀ 315–400 cm TL
Birth: 114–160 cm TL



Carcharodon carcharias (Linnaeus, 1758)
Great white shark – Grand requin blanc
Jaquetón blanco

WSH

CITES App. II

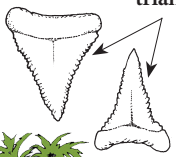


Underside of head

Colour: upper body blue–grey to grey–brown, underside white. Boundary between these tones is generally abrupt.

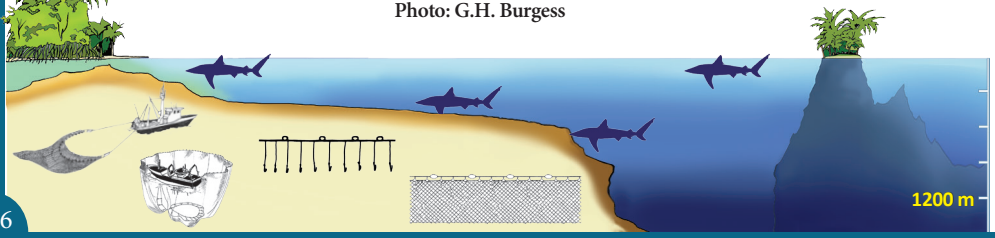
Size
Max.: 640 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 350–410 cm TL, ♀ 400–500 cm TL
Birth: 109–165 cm TL

Upper and lower teeth serrated; upper broadly triangular



Upper and lower tooth

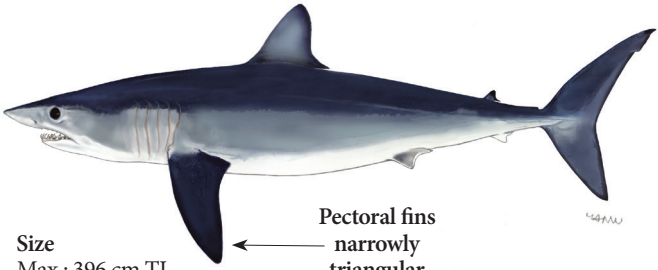
Photo: G.H. Burgess



Similar species

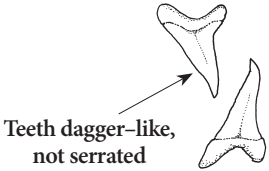
Isurus oxyrinchus

See also page 18



Pectoral fins narrowly triangular

Size
Max.: 396 cm TL

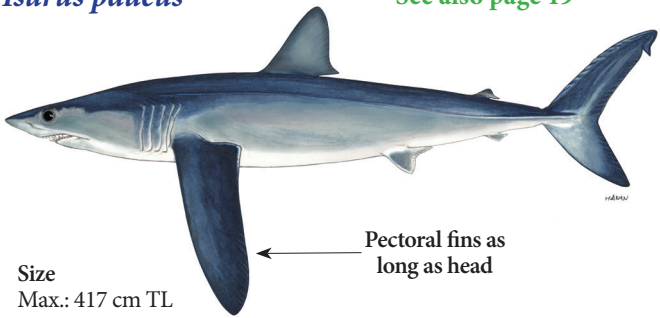


Teeth dagger–like, not serrated

Upper and lower tooth

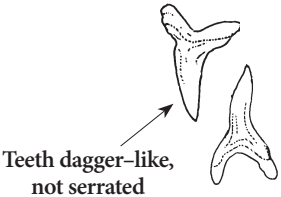
Isurus paucus

See also page 19



Pectoral fins as long as head

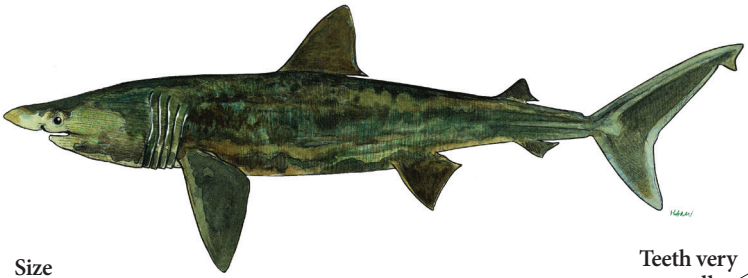
Size
Max.: 417 cm TL



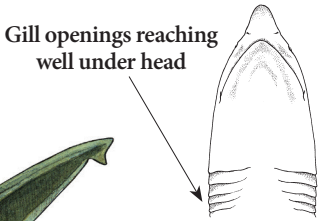
Teeth dagger–like, not serrated

Upper and lower tooth

Cetorhinus maximus



Size
Max.: 980 cm TL



Gill openings reaching well under head

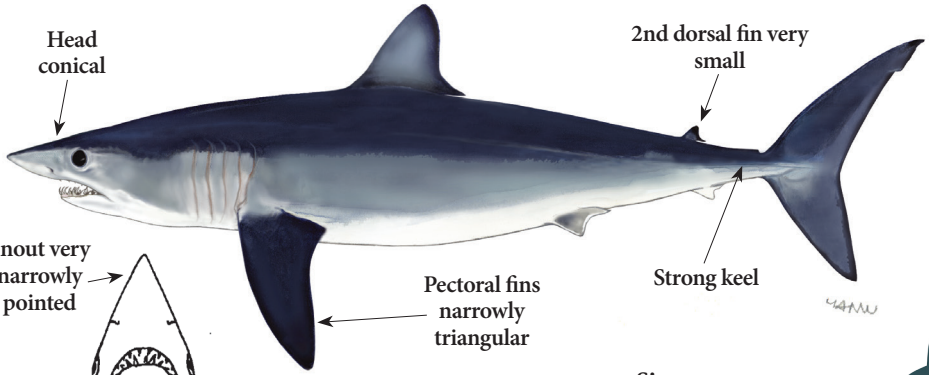
Underside of head

Teeth very small

Upper teeth

Isurus oxyrinchus Rafinesque, 1810
Shortfin mako – Taupe bleue
Marrajo dientuso

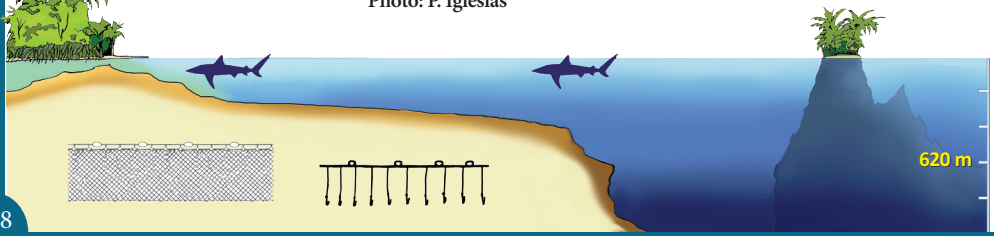
SMA



Colour: upper body bright blue–purplish, underside usually white. Pelvic and anal fins dark on anterior halves, white on posterior halves.

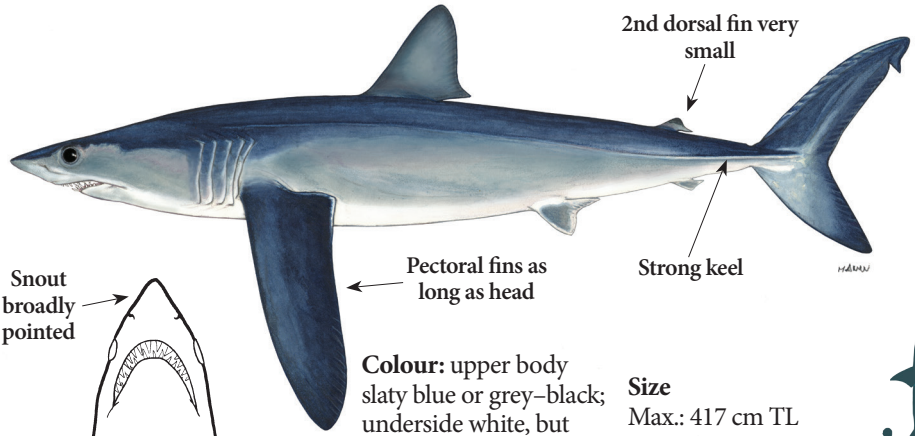
Size
Max.: 396 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 203–215 cm TL, ♀ 275–293 cm TL
Birth: 60–70 cm TL

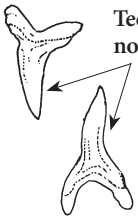
Photo: P. Iglesias



Isurus paucus (Guitart–Manday, 1969)
Longfin mako – Petite taupe
Marrajo carite

LMA



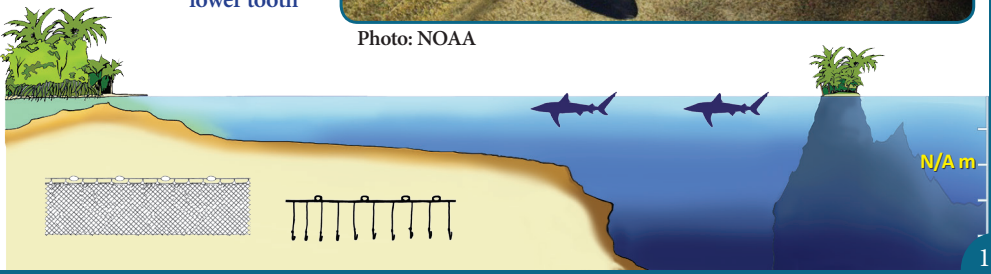


Colour: upper body slaty blue or grey–black; underside white, but underside of snout and jaws dark in large juveniles and adults.

Size
Max.: 417 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 228–245 cm TL, ♀ 245 cm TL
Birth: 97–120 cm TL

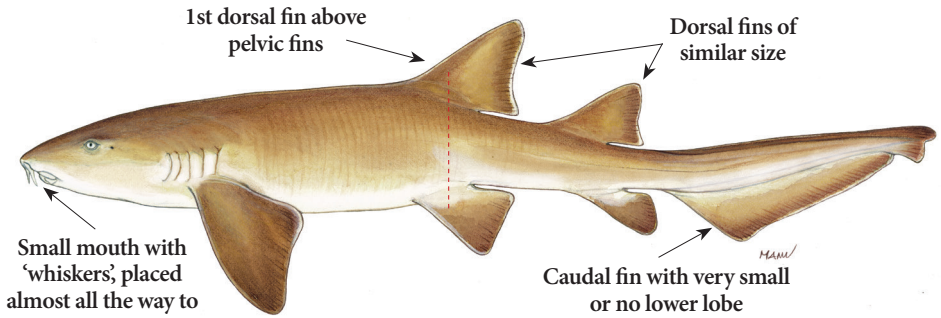
LAMNIDAE

Photo: NOAA

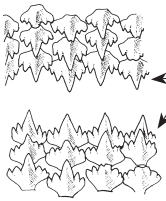


Ginglymostoma cirratum (Bonnaterre, 1788)
Nurse shark – Requin-nourrice
Gata nodriza

GNC



Underside of head

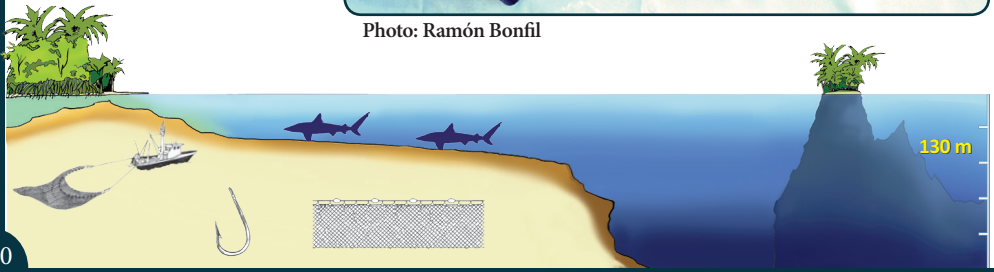


Upper and lower teeth

Colour: upper body yellowish to grey–brown, underside light whitish–brown; young with small dark spots.

Size
Max.: 304 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 210 cm TL, ♀ 230–240 cm TL
Birth: 27–30 cm TL

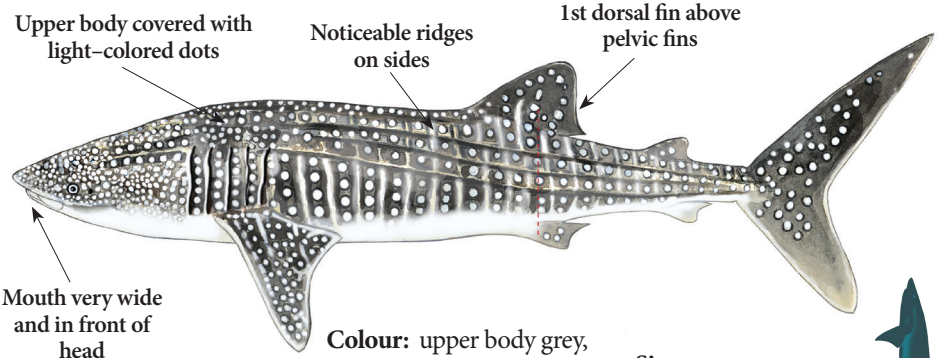
Photo: Ramón Bonfil



Rhincodon typus Smith, 1828
Whale shark – Requin baleine
Tiburón ballena

RHN

CITES App. II



Colour: upper body grey, bluish or greenish–brown, with a noticeable pattern of white or yellow spots and vertical stripes; underside white or yellowish.

Size
Max.: 1370 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 705 cm TL, ♀ 1060 cm TL
Birth: 55– 64 cm TL

Lateral view of head

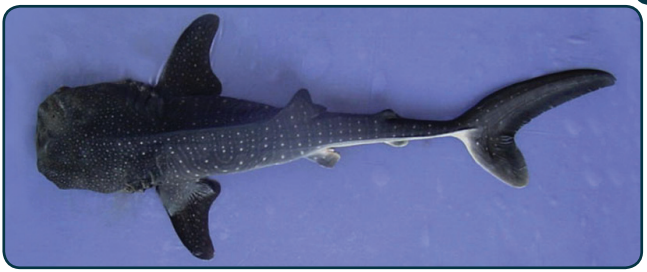
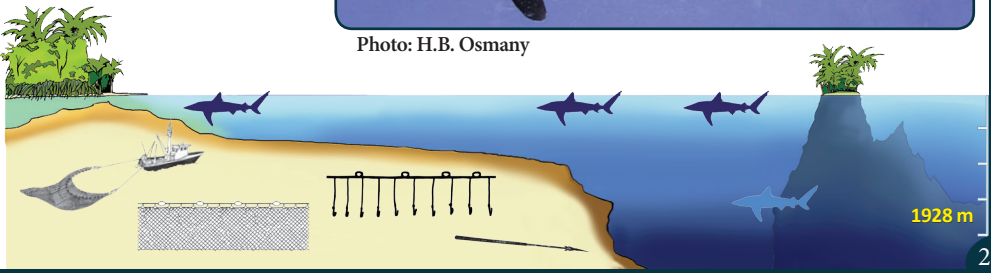
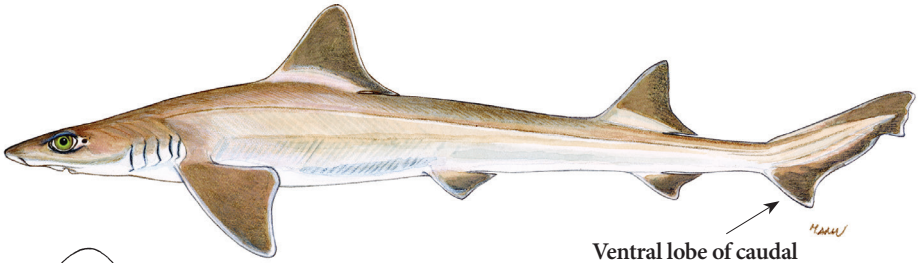


Photo: H.B. Osmany

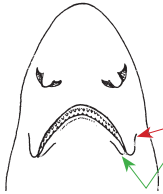


Mustelus canis (Mitchill, 1815)
Dusky smooth–hound – Émissole douce
Boca dulce

CTI



Ventral lobe of caudal fin small and rounded



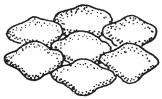
Upper labial furrows longer than lower furrows

Underside of head

Colour: upper body olive grey or slaty grey, underside yellowish or whitish grey, posterior margin of first dorsal fin white in younger specimens.

Size
Max.: 150 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 82 cm TL,
♀ 90 cm TL
Birth: 34–39 cm TL

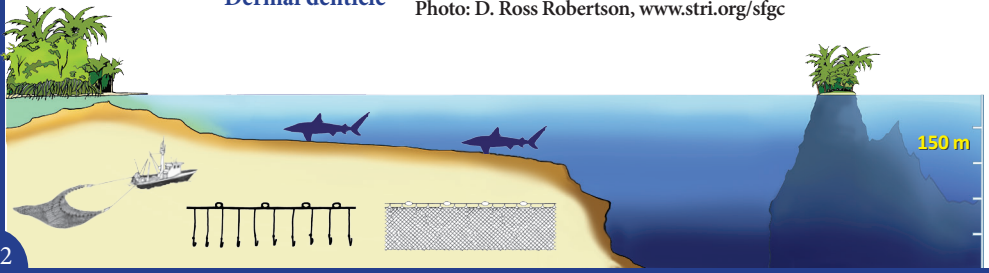
Dermal denticles on back between dorsal and pectoral fins, with a single cusp



Teeth

Dermal denticle

Photo: D. Ross Robertson, www.stri.org/sfgc

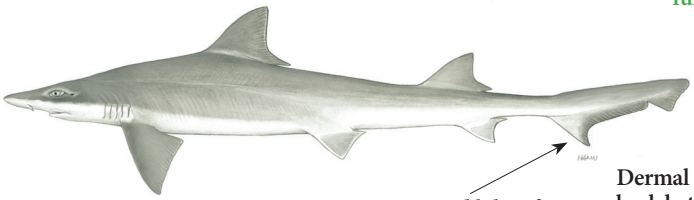


TRIAKIDAE

Similar species

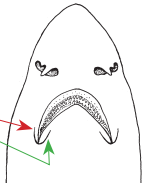
Mustelus higmani

See also page 24



Ventral lobe of caudal fin small and pointed

Upper labial furrows about as long as lower furrows



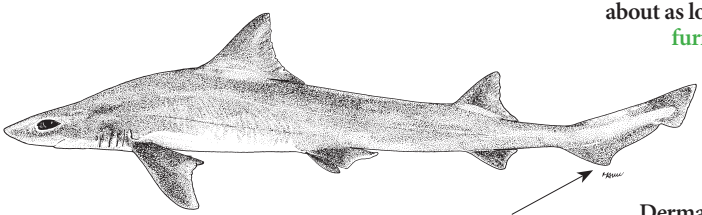
Underside of head

Dermal denticles on back between dorsal and pectoral fins with three cusps

Dermal denticles

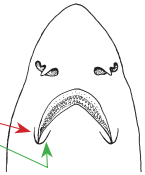
Size
Max.: 65 cm TL

Mustelus minicanis



Ventral lobe of caudal fin small and rounded

Upper labial furrows about as long as lower furrows



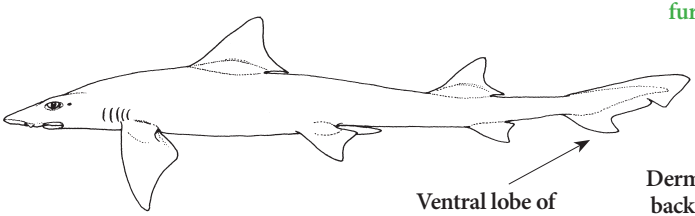
Underside of head

Dermal denticles of back mostly with a single cusps

Dermal denticle

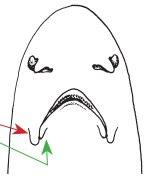
Size
Max.: 57 cm TL

Mustelus norrisi



Ventral lobe of caudal fin moderate and pointed

Upper labial furrows about as long as lower furrows



Underside of head

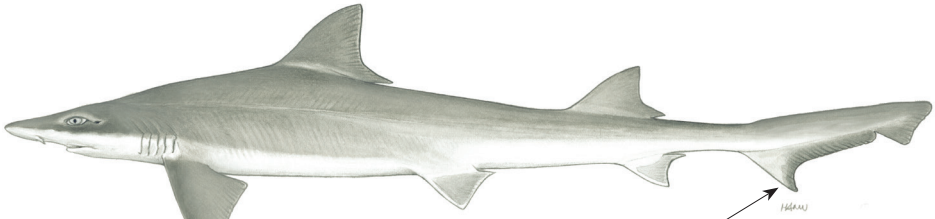
Dermal denticles of back mostly with a single cusps

Dermal denticle

Size
Max.: 98 cm TL

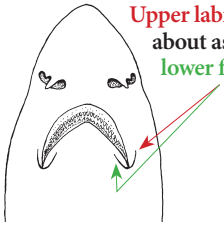
Mustelus higmani Springer and Lowe, 1963
Smalleye smooth–hound – Émissole ti-yeux
Musola amarilla

CTJ



Ventral lobe of caudal fin small and pointed

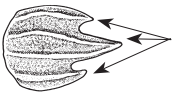
TRIAKIDAE



Underside of head

Colour: upper body pale grey or bronze, with golden to brassy reflections, underside whitish.

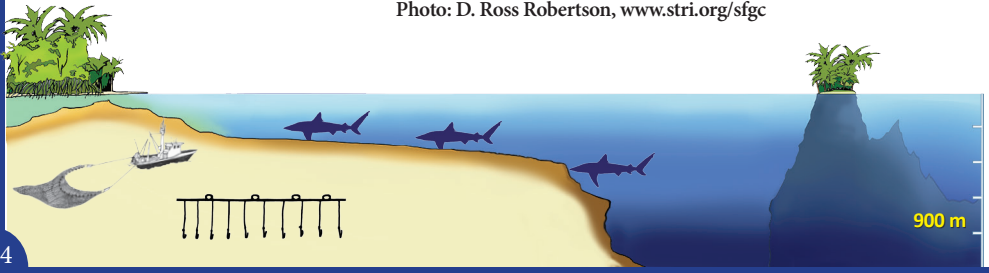
Size
Max.: 65 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 43 cm TL,
♀ 48 cm TL
Birth: 21–24 cm TL



Dermal denticles of back mostly with three cusps

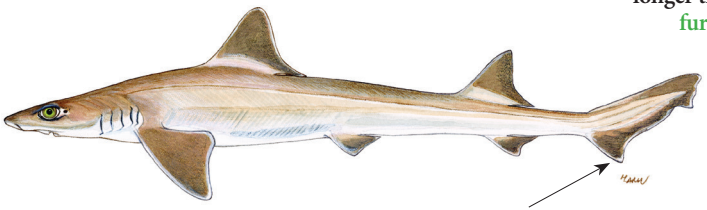
Dermal denticles

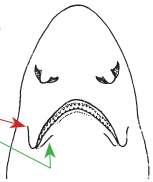
Photo: D. Ross Robertson, www.stri.org/sfgc



Mustelus canis

See also page 22



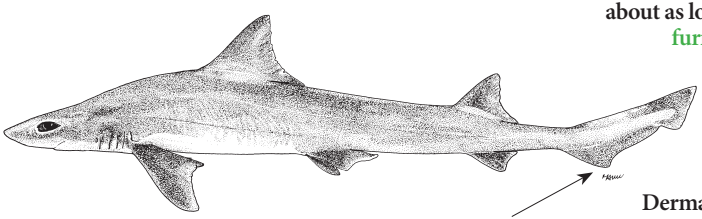


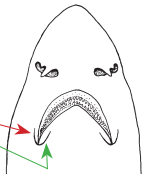
Ventral lobe of caudal fin small and rounded

Dermal denticles of back mostly with a single cusps

Size
Max.: 150 cm TL

Mustelus minicanis



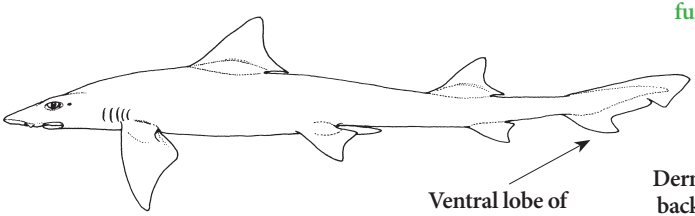


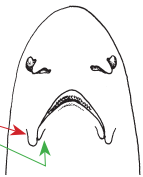
Ventral lobe of caudal fin small and rounded

Dermal denticles of back mostly with a single cusps

Size
Max.: 57 cm TL

Mustelus norrisi





Ventral lobe of caudal fin moderate and pointed

Dermal denticles of back mostly with a single cusps

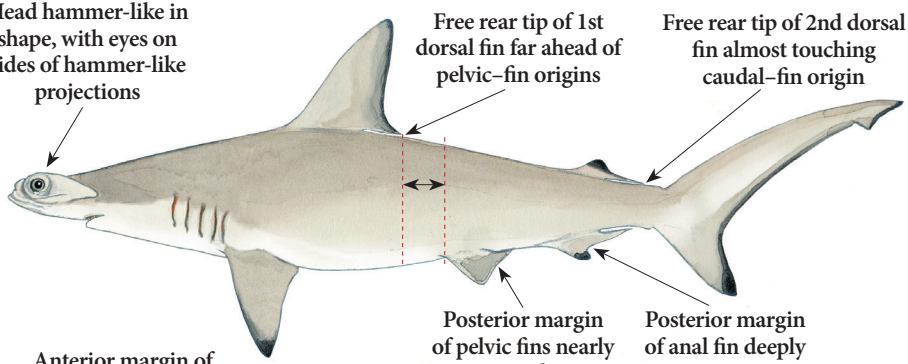
Size
Max.: 98 cm TL

Sphyrna lewini (Griffith and Smith, 1834)
Scalloped hammerhead
Requin-marteau halicorne – Cornuda común

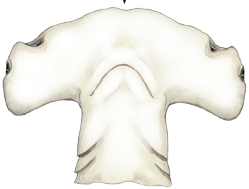
SPL

CITES App. II

SPHYRNIDAE



Anterior margin of head convex, with a strong notch in the middle

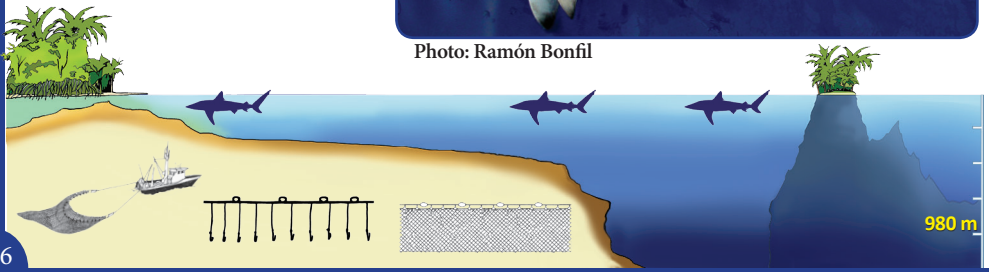


Underside of head

Colour: upper body grey, greyish brown or olivaceous, underside white; pectoral fins tipped dusky below.

Size
Max.: 420 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 140–165 cm TL, ♀ 212 cm TL
Birth: 42–55 cm TL

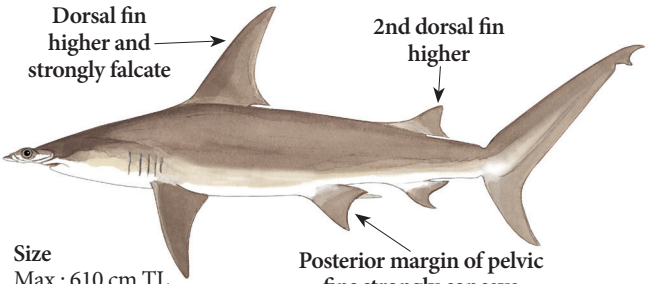
Photo: Ramón Bonfil



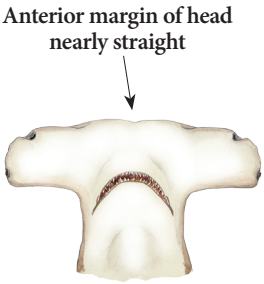
Similar species

Sphyrna mokarran

See also page 28



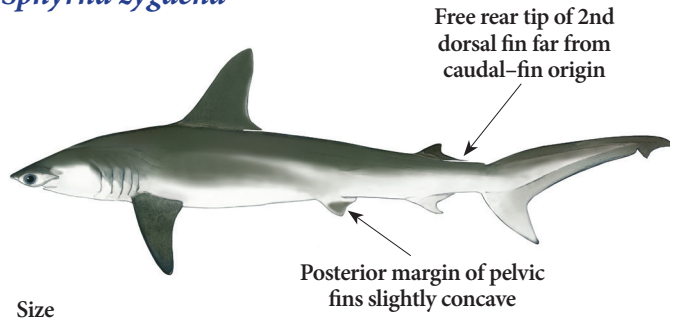
Size
Max.: 610 cm TL



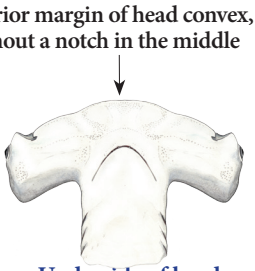
Underside of head

Sphyrna zygaena

CITES App. II



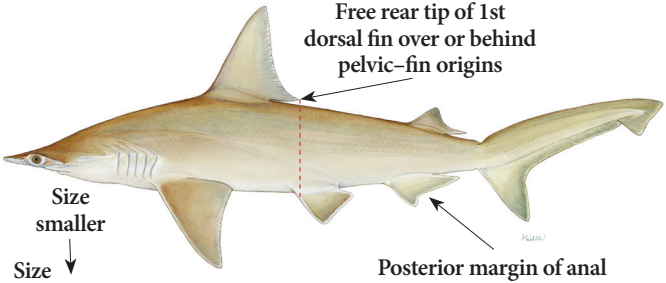
Size
Max.: 400 cm TL



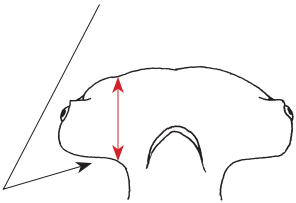
Underside of head

Sphyrna tudes

See also page 32



Max.: 150 cm TL



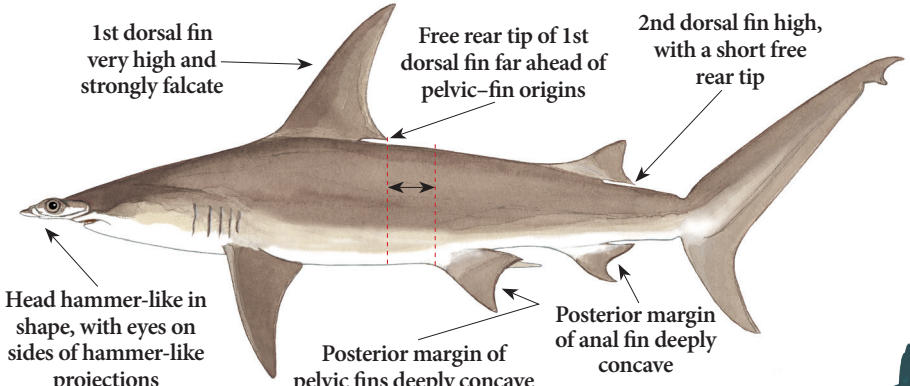
Underside of head

Sphyrna mokarran (Rüppel, 1837)

Great hammerhead – Grand requin-marteau
Cornuda gigante

SPK

CITES App. II



Anterior margin of head straight, with a strong notch in the middle

Underside of head

Colour: upper body grey or grey-brown, paler below; fins with dusky tips in young.

Size
Max.: 610 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 234–269 cm TL, ♀ 250–300 cm TL
Birth: 50–70 cm TL

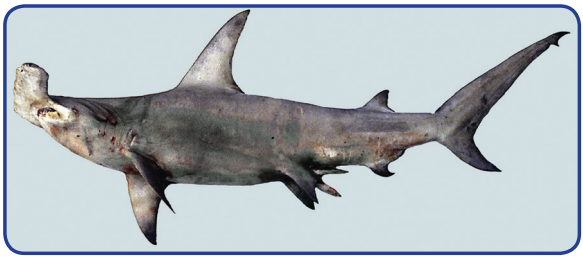
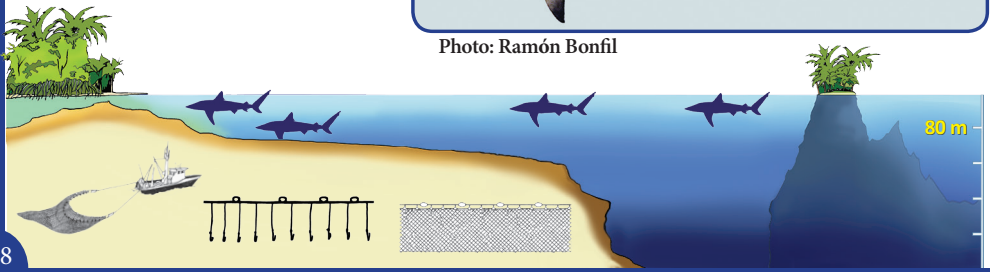


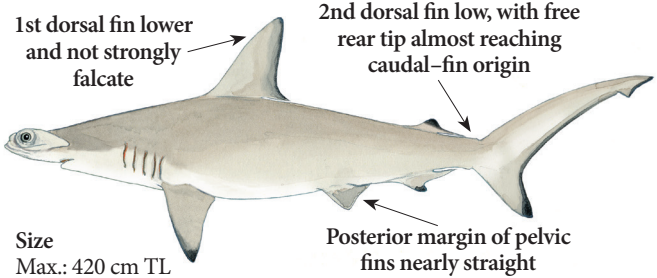
Photo: Ramón Bonfil



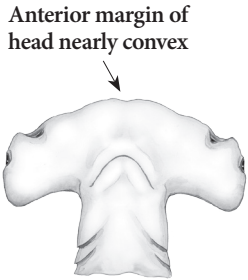
Similar species

Sphyrna lewini

See also page 26



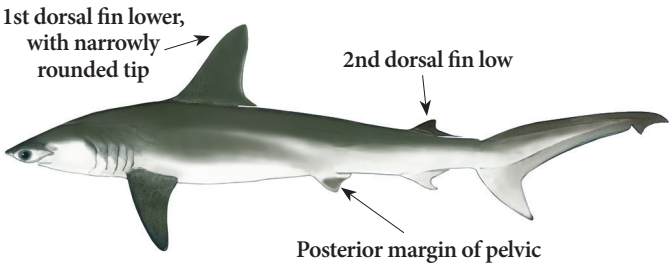
Size
Max.: 420 cm TL



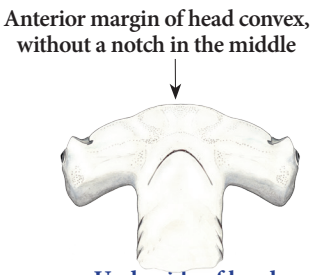
Underside of head

Sphyrna zygaena

CITES App. II



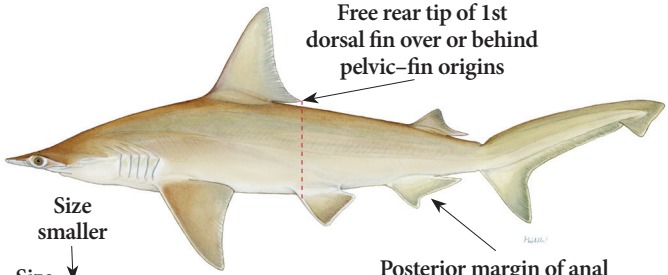
Size
Max.: 400 cm TL



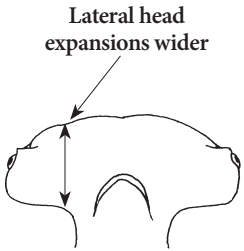
Underside of head

Sphyrna tudes

See also page 32



Max.: 150 cm TL

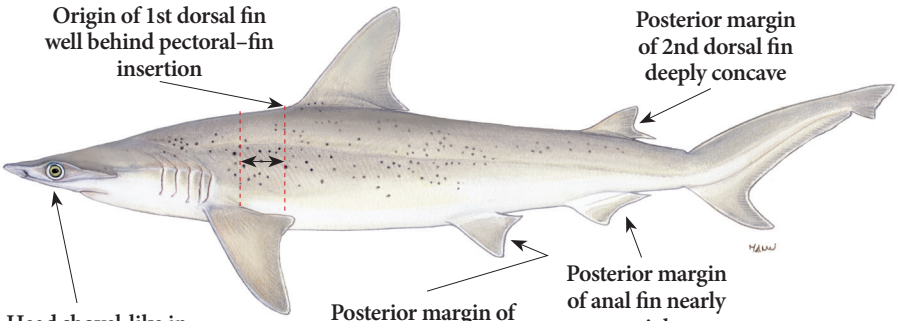


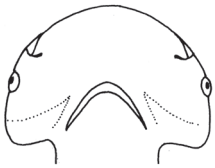
Underside of head

Sphyrna tiburo (Linnaeus, 1758)

Bonnethead – Requin-marteau tiburo
Cornuda tiburo

SPJ





Underside of head

Colour: upper body grey or grey-brown, light below, often with small dark spots on sides of body.

Size
Max.: 150 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 52–75 cm TL, ♀ 84 cm TL
Birth: 35–40 cm TL

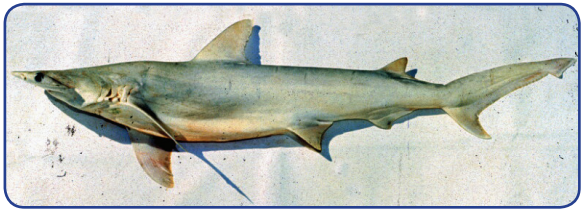
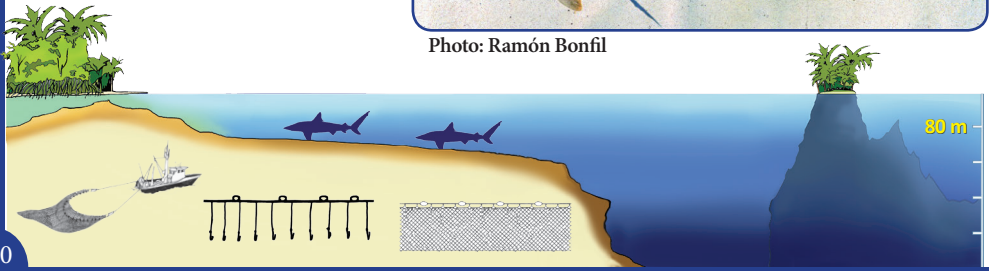


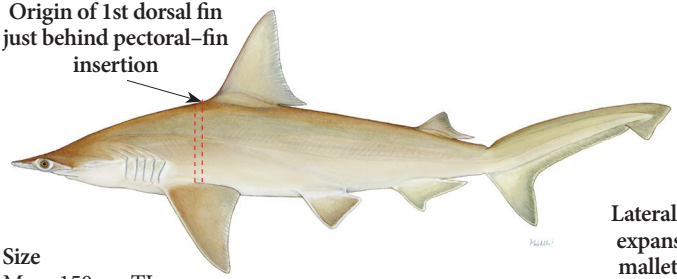
Photo: Ramón Bonfil



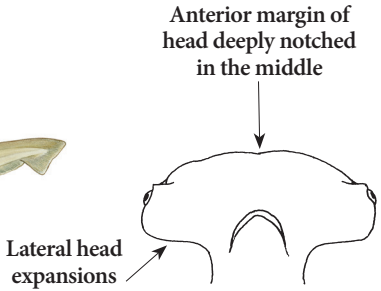
Similar species

Sphyrna tudes

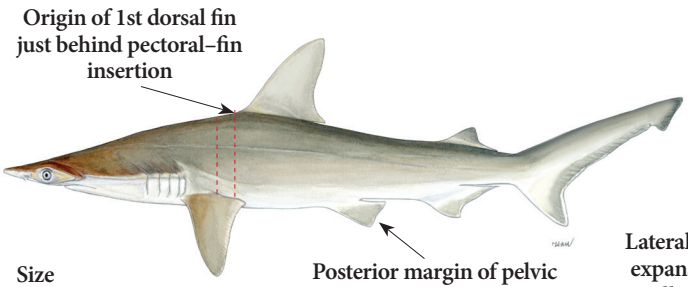
See also page 32



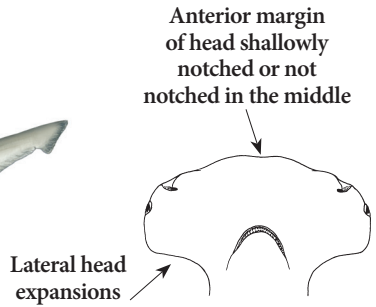
Size
Max.: 150 cm TL



Sphyrna media

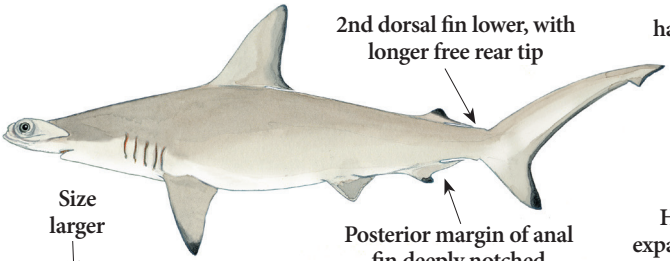


Size
Max.: 150 cm TL

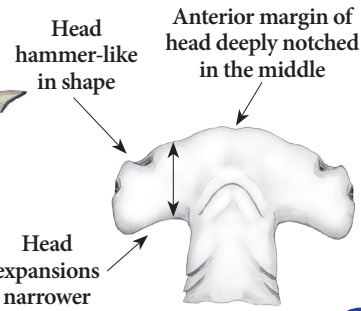


Sphyrna lewini

See also page 26

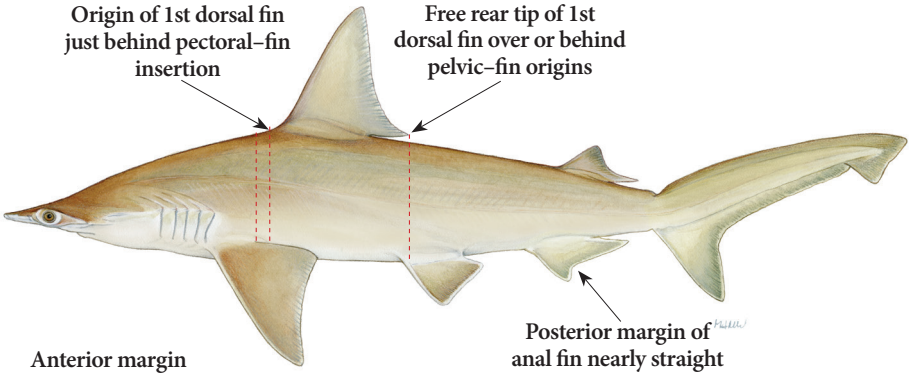


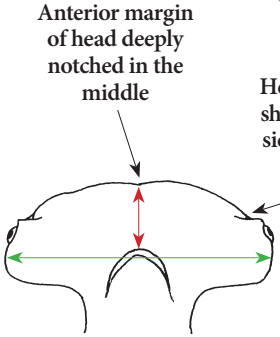
Size
Max.: 420 cm TL



Sphyrna tudes (Valenciennes, 1822)
Smalleye hammerhead
Requin-marteau à petits yeux – Cornuda ojichica

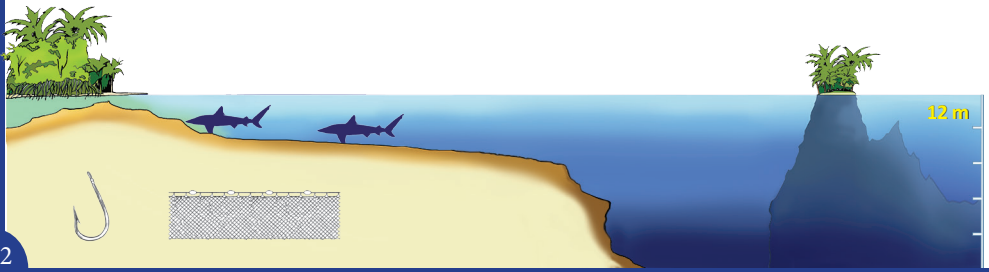
SPQ





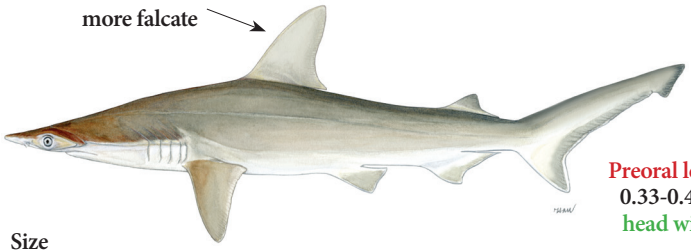
Colour: upper body grey-brown to golden, underside light; fins without markings.

Size
Max.: 150 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 110–134 cm TL, ♀ 120–148 cm TL
Birth: 30 cm TL



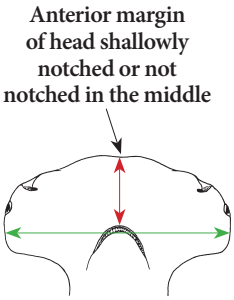
Similar species

Sphyrna media



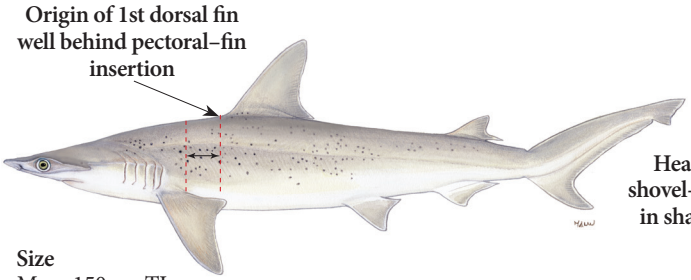
Size
Max.: 150 cm TL

Preoral length 0.33-0.40 of head width



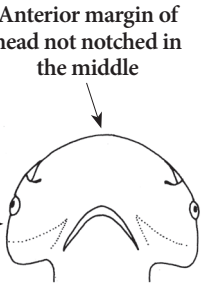
Sphyrna tiburo

See also page 30



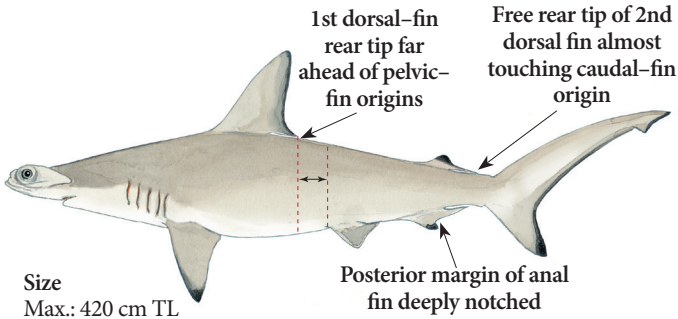
Size
Max.: 150 cm TL

Head shovel-like in shape

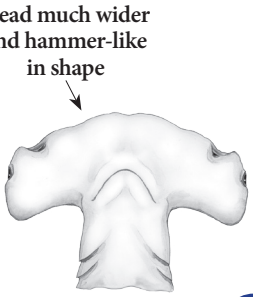


Sphyrna lewini

See also page 26

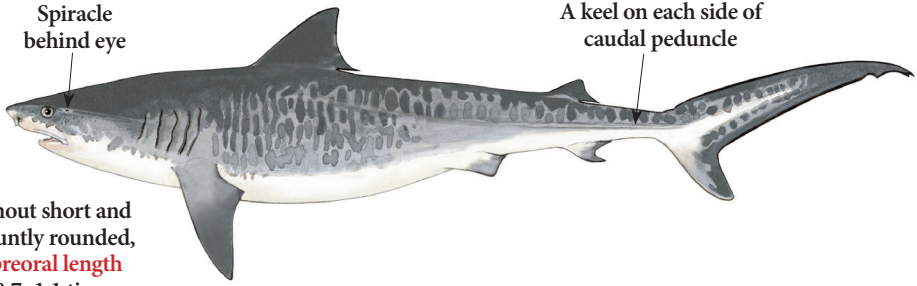


Size
Max.: 420 cm TL

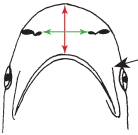


Galeocerdo cuvier (Peron and LeSueur, 1822)
Tiger shark – Requin tigre commun
Tintorera tigre

TIG



Snout short and bluntly rounded, preoral length 0.7–1.1 times internarial width

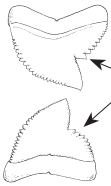


Upper labial furrows very long, almost reaching eye

Underside of head

Colour: upper body dark grey or greyish brown, underside whitish; young with dark vertical bars and spots on sides, fading in adults.

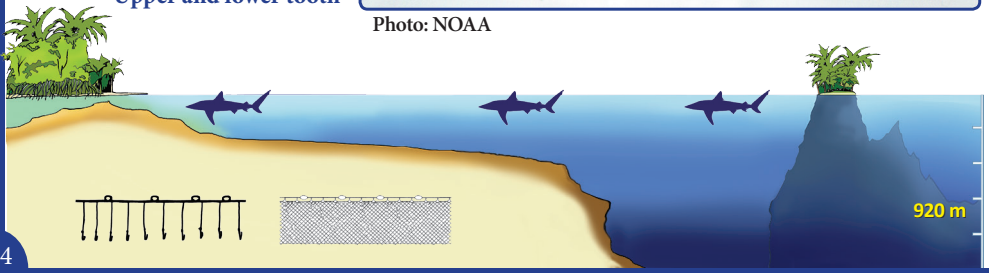
Size
Max.: 550 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 226–290 cm TL
♀ 250–350 cm TL
Birth: 51–76 cm TL



Upper and lower teeth coarsely serrated, with large cusplets on inner base and a deep notch on the inside margin

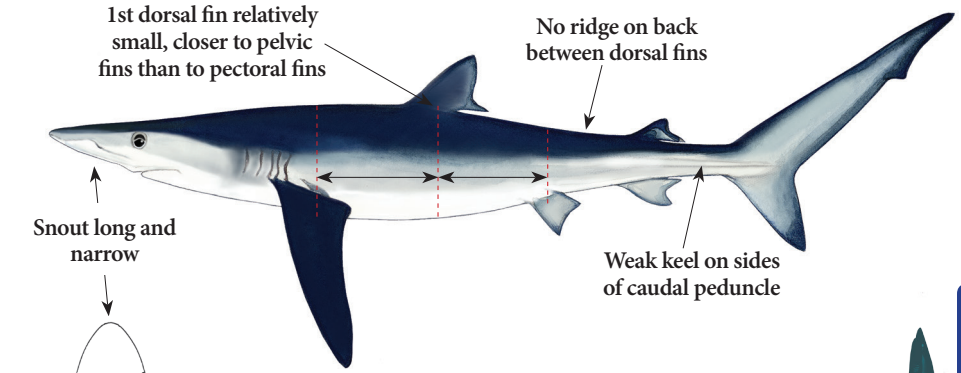
Upper and lower tooth

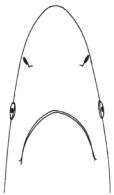
Photo: NOAA



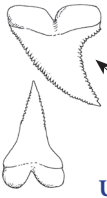
Prionace glauca (Linnaeus, 1758)
Blue shark – Peau bleue
Tiburón azul

BSH





Underside of head



Upper teeth heavily serrated, and triangularly curved inwards

Upper and lower tooth

Colour: dark blue on top, bright blue on sides (purple blackish after death), underside white. Tips of pectoral and anal fins dusky.

Size
Max.: 383 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 182–218 cm TL
♀ 166–221 cm TL
Birth: 34–48 cm TL

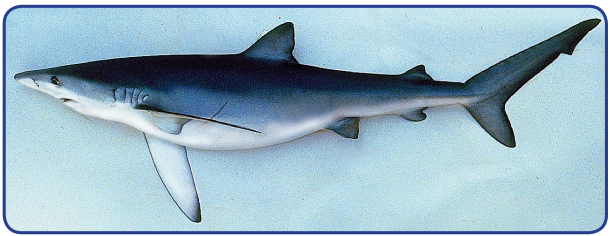
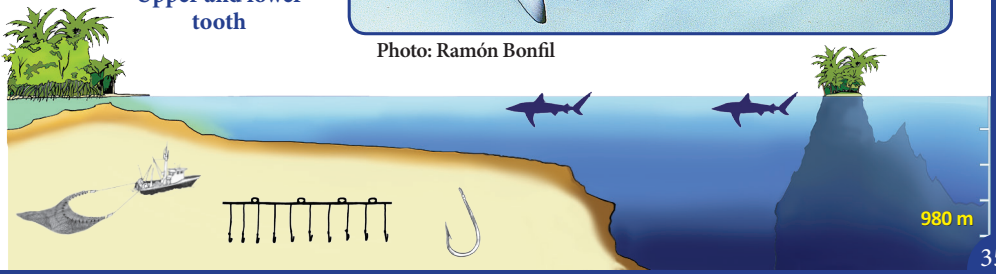


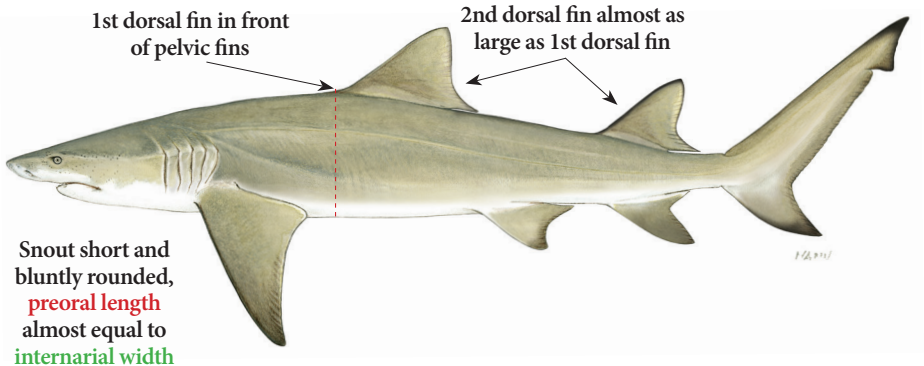
Photo: Ramón Bonfil



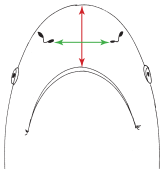
Negaprion brevirostris (Poey, 1868)

Lemon shark – Requin citron
Tiburón galano

NGB



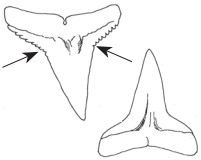
Snout short and bluntly rounded, preoral length almost equal to internarial width



Underside of head

Colour: olive grey or yellowish brown, but often darker; belly yellowish or whitish.

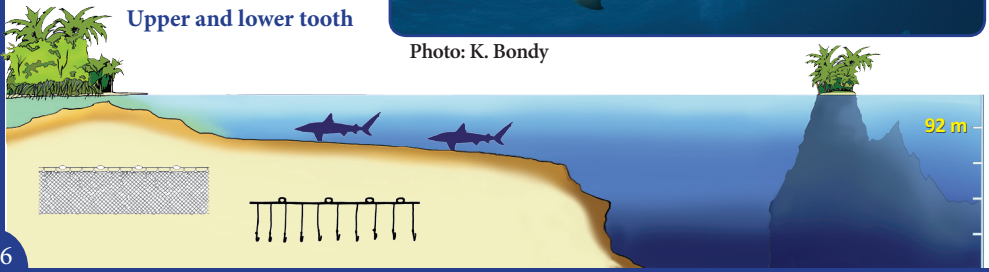
Size
Max.: 340 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 224 cm TL, ♀ 239 cm TL
Birth: 60–65 cm TL



Upper teeth serrated and notched on both sides

Upper and lower tooth

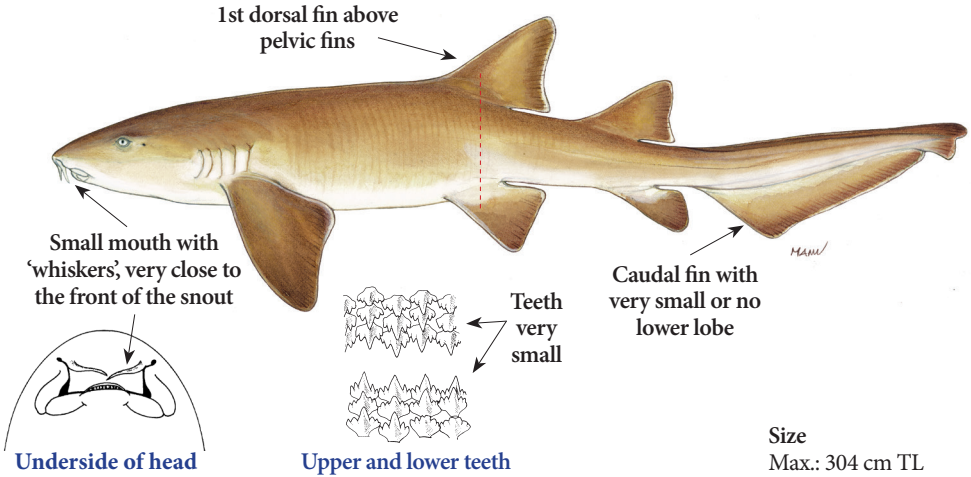
Photo: K. Bondy



Similar species

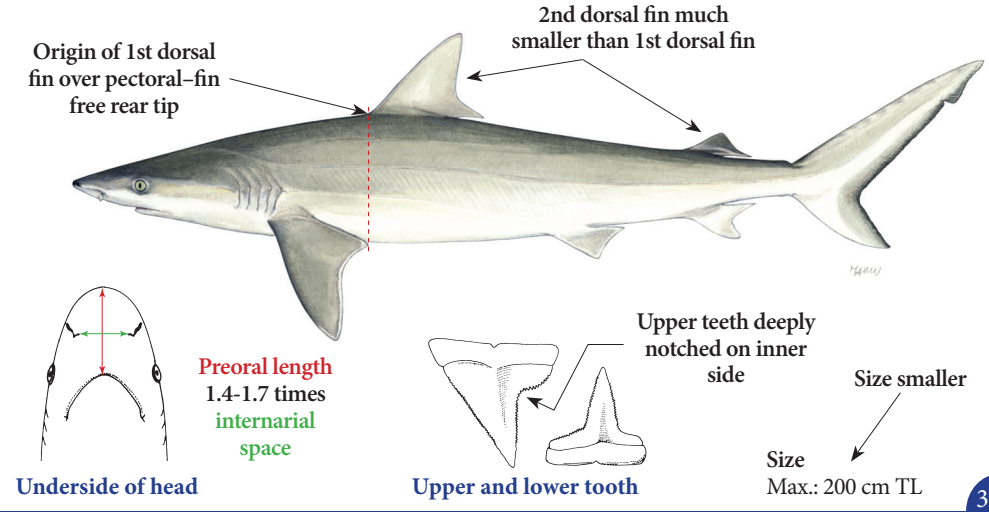
Ginglymostoma cirratum

See also page 20



Carcharhinus acronotus

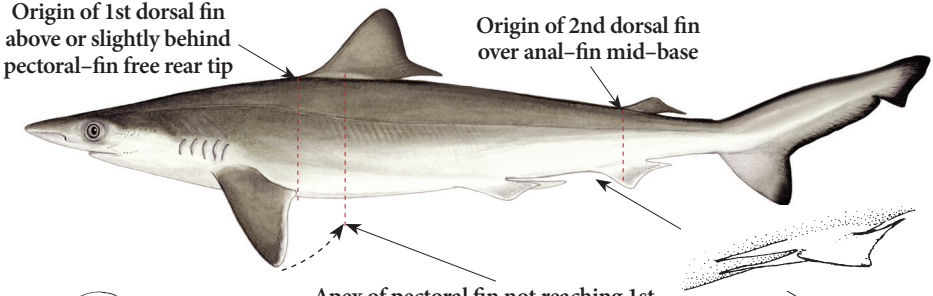
See also page 42

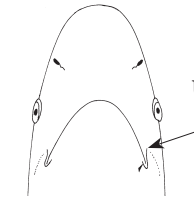


Rhizoprionodon lalandii (Valenciennes, 1839)

Brazilian sharpnose shark – Requin aiguille brésilien
Cazón picudo chino

RHL

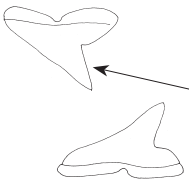




Underside of head

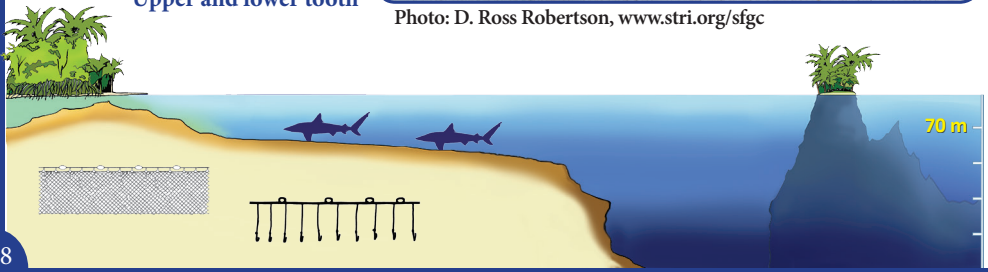
Colour: upper body greyish brown, underside white, pectoral fins with white posterior margins, caudal fin with dark margins.

Size
Max.: 77 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 45–50 cm TL, ♀ 54 cm TL
Birth: 33–34 cm TL



Upper and lower tooth

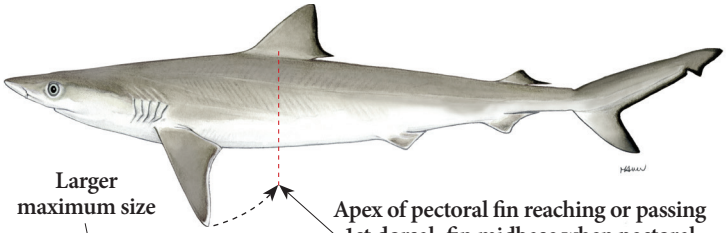
Photo: D. Ross Robertson, www.stri.org/sfgc



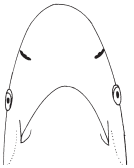
Similar species

Rhizoprionodon porosus

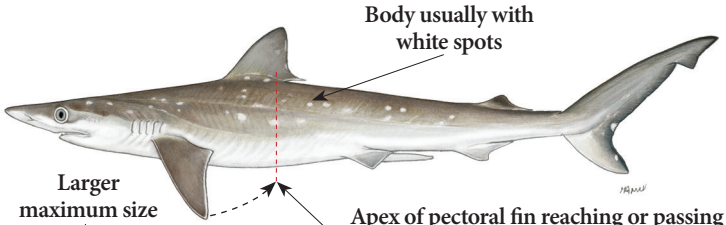
See also page 40

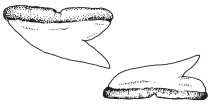


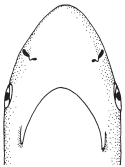

Upper and lower tooth


Underside of head

Rhizoprionodon terraenovae

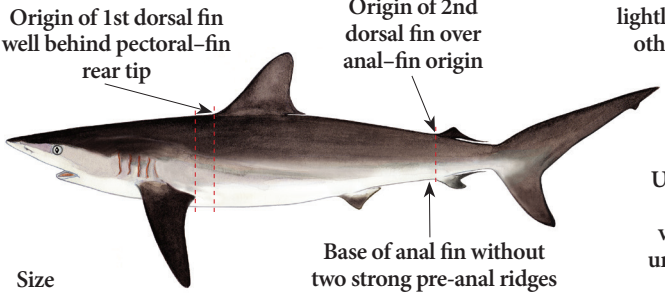



Upper and lower tooth

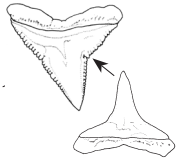

Underside of head

Carcharhinus falciformis

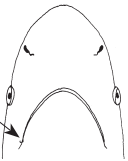
See also page 44



Upper teeth strongly notched in one side, lightly notched in the other, and heavily serrated


Upper and lower tooth

Upper labial furrows very small, unnoticeable

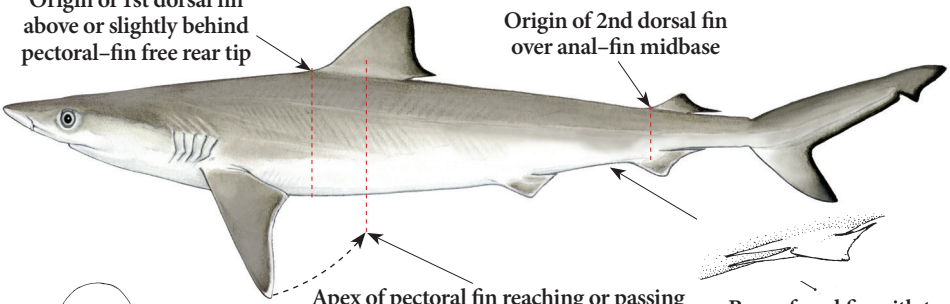

Underside of head

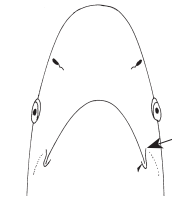
Rhizoprionodon porosus (Poey, 1861)

Caribbean sharpnose shark – Requin aiguille antillais
Cazón picudo antillano

RHR

CARCHARHINIDAE



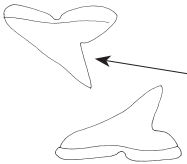


Upper labial furrows long and noticeable

Underside of head

Colour: upper body brown or greyish brown without light spots, underside whitish, posterior margins of pectoral fins white, of dorsal and caudal fins blackish.

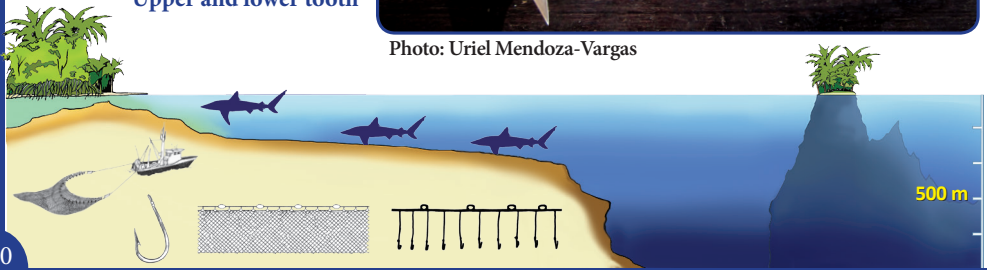
Size
Max.: 110 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 60 cm TL, ♀ 80 cm TL
Birth: 31–39 cm TL



Teeth small, strongly oblique, and without serrations

Upper and lower tooth

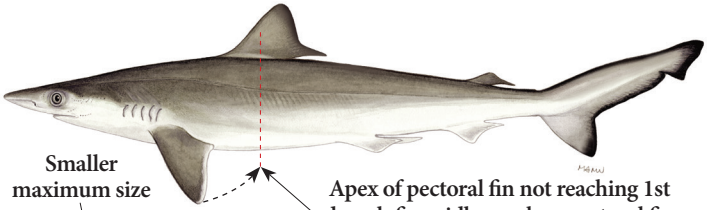
Photo: Uriel Mendoza-Vargas



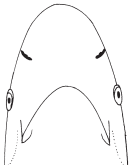
Similar species

Rhizoprionodon lalandii

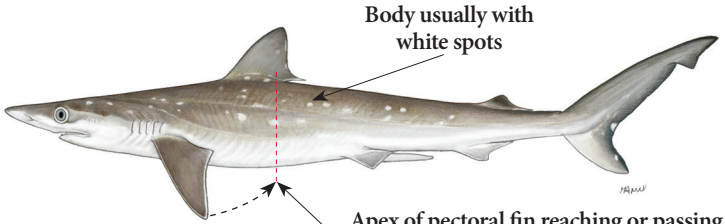
See also page 38

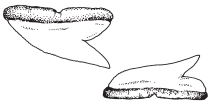


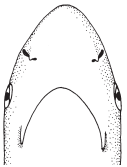

Upper and lower tooth


Underside of head

Rhizoprionodon terraenovae

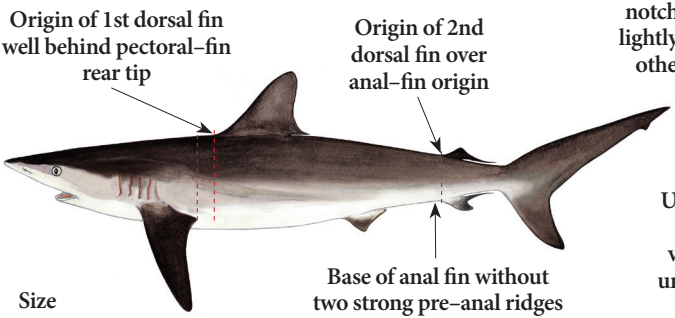



Upper and lower tooth

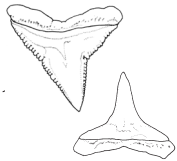

Underside of head

Carcharhinus falciformis

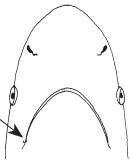
See also page 44



Upper teeth strongly notched in one side, lightly notched in the other, and heavily serrated

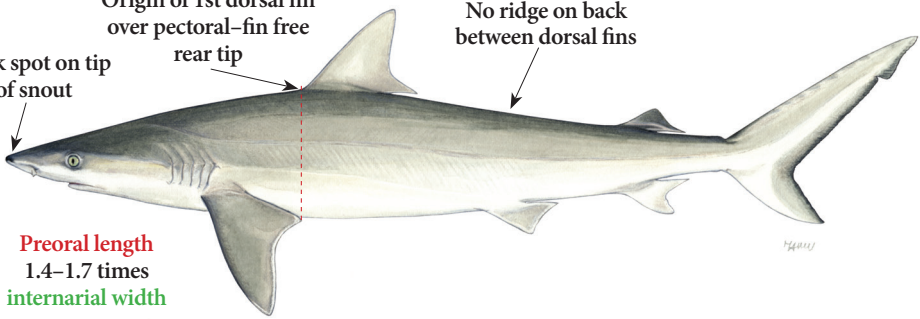

Upper and lower tooth

Upper labial furrows very small, unnoticeable

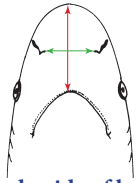

Underside of head

Carcharhinus acronotus (Poey, 1860)
Blacknose shark – Requin nez noir
Tiburón amarillo

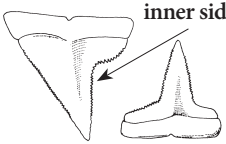
CCN



Preoral length
1.4–1.7 times
internarial width



Underside of head

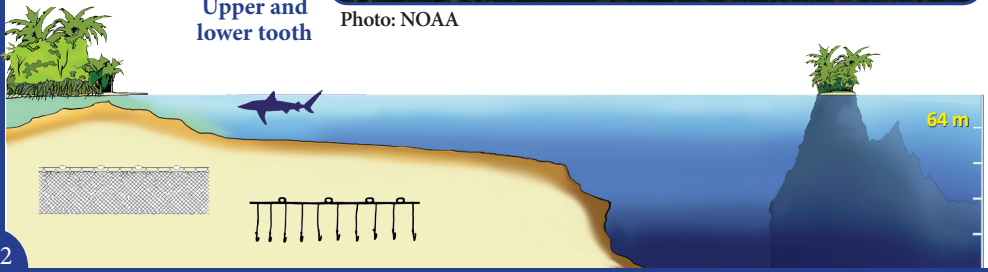


Upper and lower tooth

Colour: upper body grey, yellowish–brow, or brown; underside whitish; Fins not black tipped.

Size
Max.: 200 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 97–106 cm TL, ♀ 103 cm TL
Birth: 50 cm TL

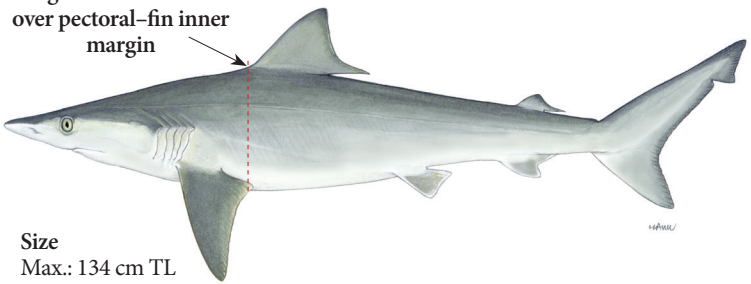
Photo: NOAA



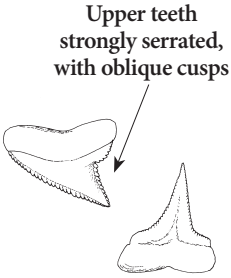
Similar species

Carcharhinus porosus

See also page 54



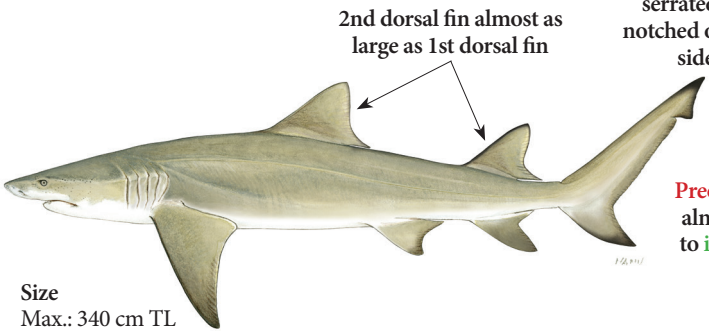
Size
Max.: 134 cm TL



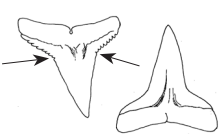
Upper and lower tooth

Negaprion brevirostris

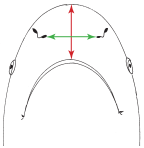
See also page 36



Size
Max.: 340 cm TL



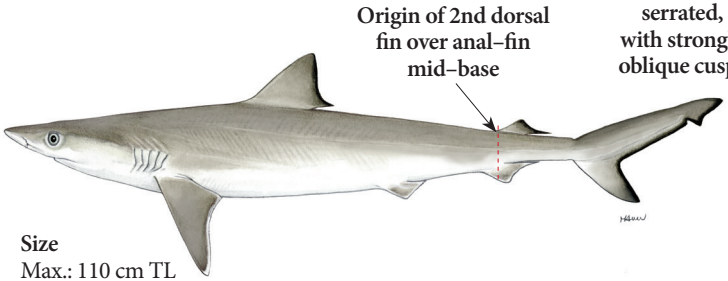
Upper and lower tooth



Underside of head

Rhizoprionodon porosus

See also page 40



Size
Max.: 110 cm TL

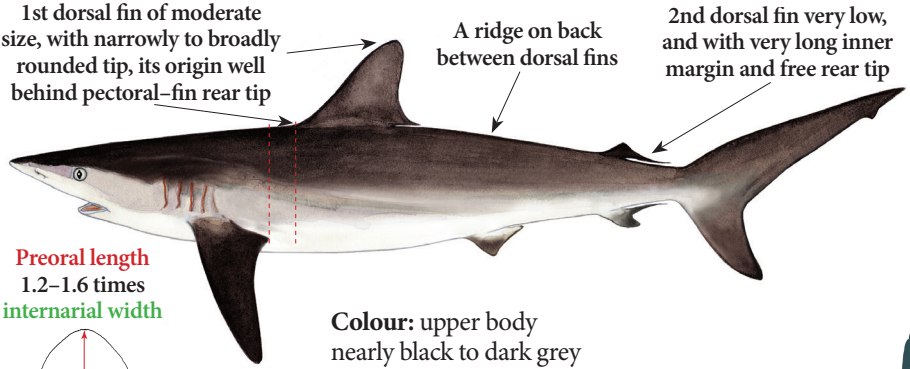
Upper and lower tooth

Underside of head

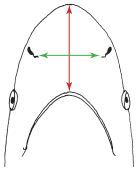
Carcharhinus falciformis (Muller and Henle, 1839)

Silky shark – Requin soyeux
Tiburón jaquetón

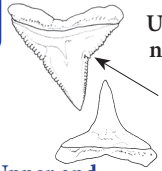
FAL



Preoral length
1.2–1.6 times
internarial width



Underside of head



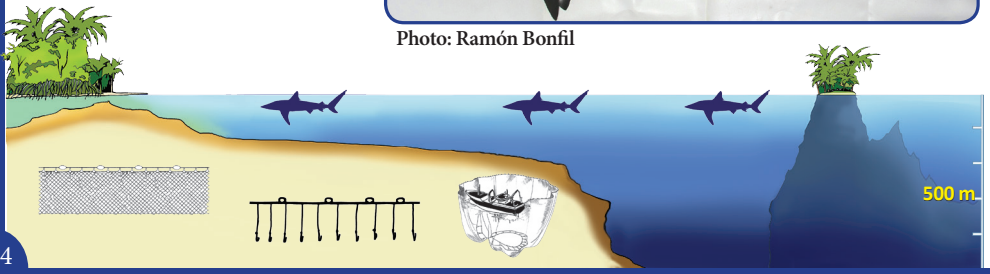
Upper and lower tooth

Upper teeth strongly notched in one side, lightly notched in the other, with heavily serrated cusps and large serrations on bases

Colour: upper body nearly black to dark grey or brown grey; lower body whitish. Pectoral fins black–tipped underneath, pelvic fins often dusky but not black–tipped.

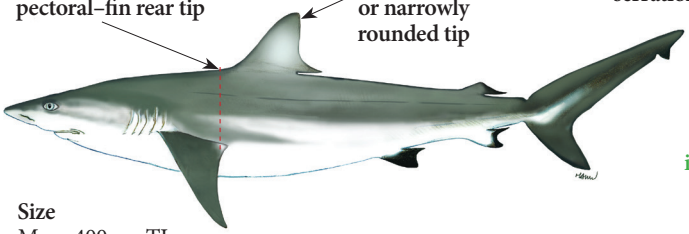
Size
Max.: 330 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 215–225 cm TL,
♀ 232–246 cm TL
Birth: 76 cm TL

Photo: Ramón Bonfil

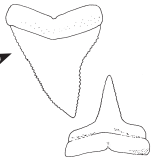


Similar species

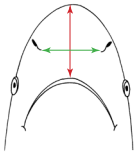
Carcharhinus obscurus



Size
Max.: 400 cm TL

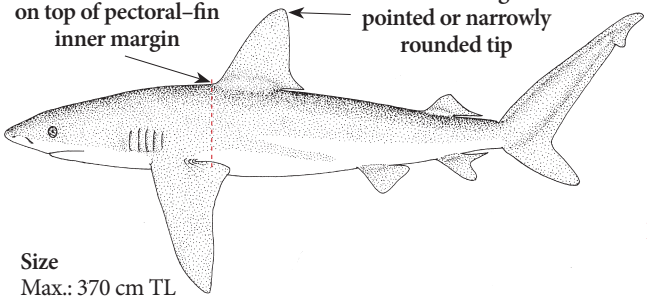


Upper and lower tooth

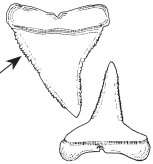


Underside of head

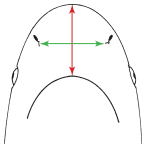
Carcharhinus galapagensis



Size
Max.: 370 cm TL



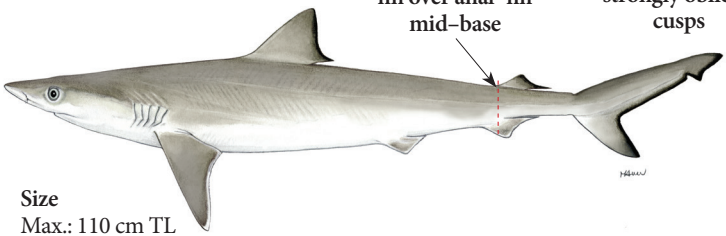
Upper and lower tooth



Underside of head

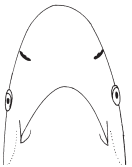
Rhizoprionodon porosus

See also page 40



Size
Max.: 110 cm TL

Upper and lower tooth

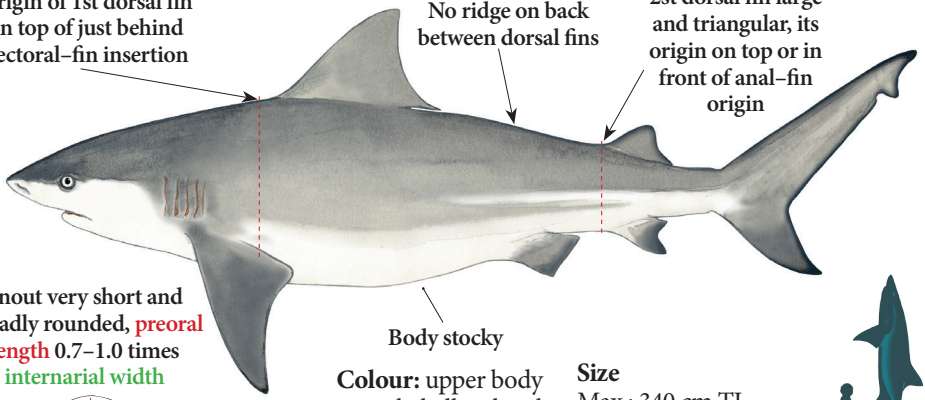


Underside of head

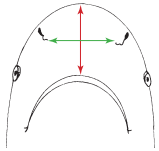
Carcharhinus leucas (Valenciennes, 1839)

Bull shark – Requin bouledogue
Tiburón sarda

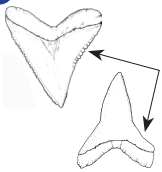
CCE



Snout very short and broadly rounded, preoral length 0.7–1.0 times internarial width



Underside of head



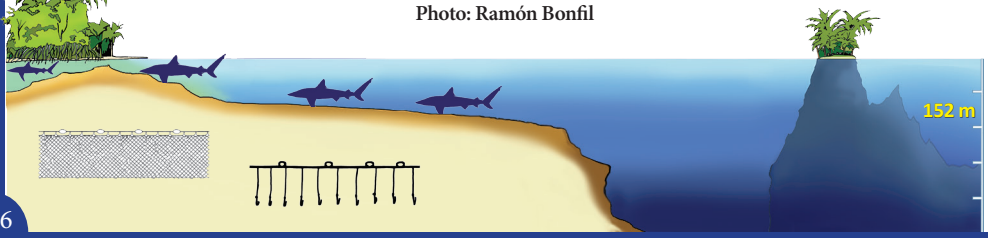
Teeth heavily serrated; uppers broadly triangular, lowers with poorly defined bases

Upper and lower tooth

Colour: upper body greyish, belly whitish; tips and edges of fins dusky to black in very young individuals.

Size
Max.: 340 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 157–226 cm TL, ♀ 180–230 cm TL
Birth: 56–81 cm TL

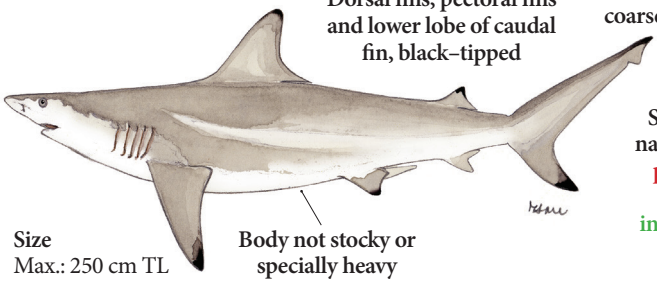
Photo: Ramón Bonfil



Similar species

Carcharhinus limbatus

See also page 48

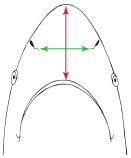


Size
Max.: 250 cm TL

Upper teeth with narrow, straight, serrated cusps, and coarsely serrated bases

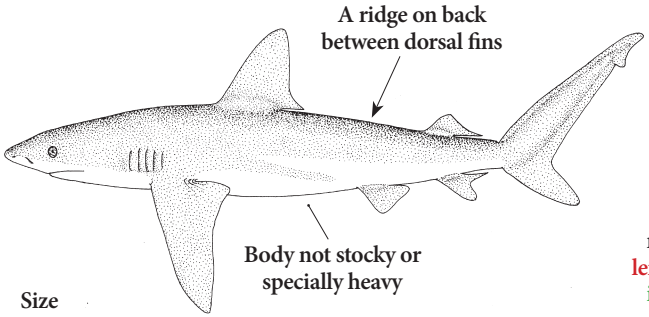
Upper and lower tooth

Snout long and narrowly pointed, preoral length 1.3–1.7 times internarial width



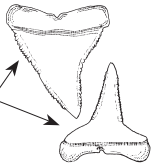
Underside of head

Carcharhinus galapagensis



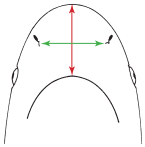
Size
Max.: 370 cm TL

Upper teeth with long, nearly triangular serrated cusps; lower teeth with narrow straight cusps and well–defined bases



Upper and lower tooth

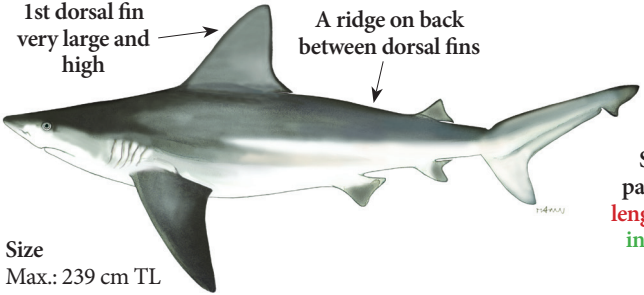
Snout short and rounded, preoral length 1.0–1.3 times internarial width



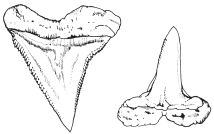
Underside of head

Carcharhinus plumbeus

See also page 52

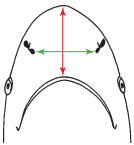


Size
Max.: 239 cm TL



Upper and lower tooth

Snout broadly parabolic, preoral length 0.9–1.3 times internarial width



Underside of head

Carcharhinus limbatus (Valenciennes, 1839)

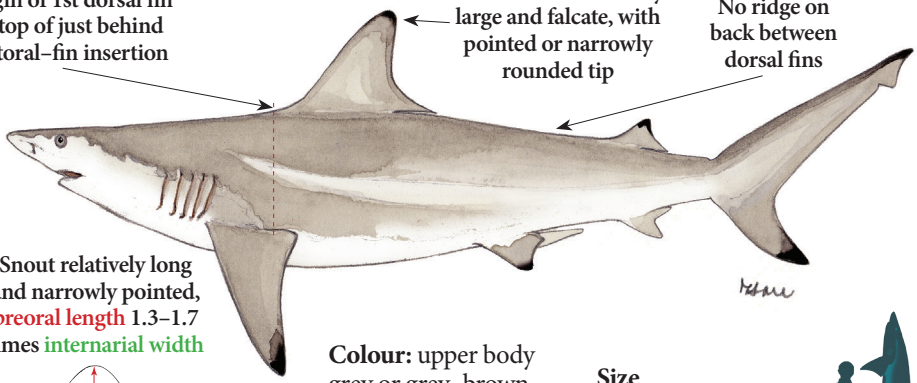
Blacktip shark – Requin bored
Tiburón macuira

CCL

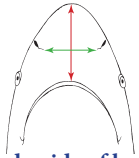
Origin of 1st dorsal fin on top of just behind pectoral–fin insertion

1st dorsal fin relatively large and falcate, with pointed or narrowly rounded tip

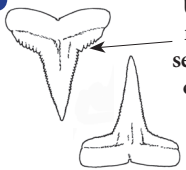
No ridge on back between dorsal fins



Snout relatively long and narrowly pointed, preoral length 1.3–1.7 times internarial width



Underside of head



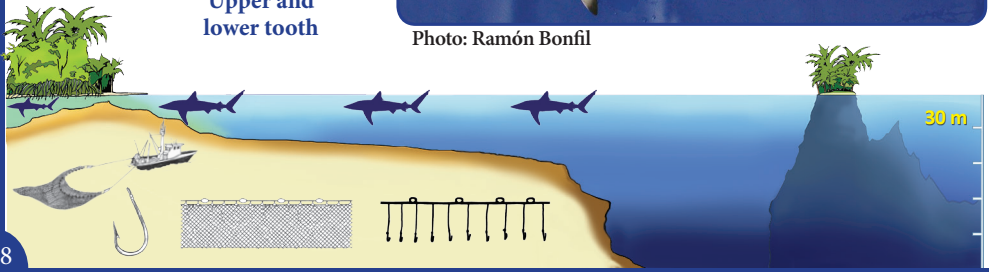
Upper teeth with narrow, straight, serrated cusps, and coarsely serrated bases

Upper and lower tooth

Colour: upper body grey or grey–brown, underside white; dorsal fins, pectoral fins, pelvic fins and lower lobe of caudal fin, black–tipped.

Size
Max.: 250 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 55–72 cm TL, ♀ 120–190 cm TL
Birth: 55–72 cm TL

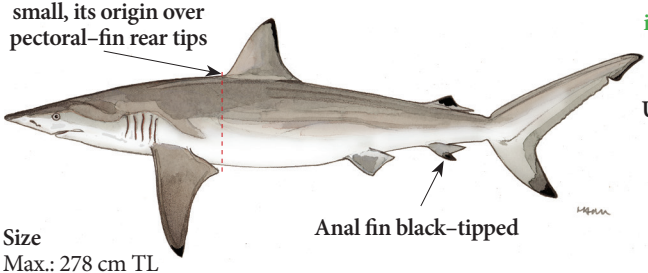
Photo: Ramón Bonfil



Similar species

Carcharhinus brevipinna

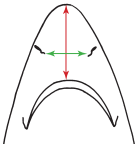
1st dorsal fin relatively small, its origin over pectoral–fin rear tips



Anal fin black–tipped

Size
Max.: 278 cm TL

Snout long and narrowly pointed, preoral length 1.5–1.8 times internarial width



Underside of head

Upper and lower teeth with fine serrations and very similar in size and shape

Upper and lower tooth

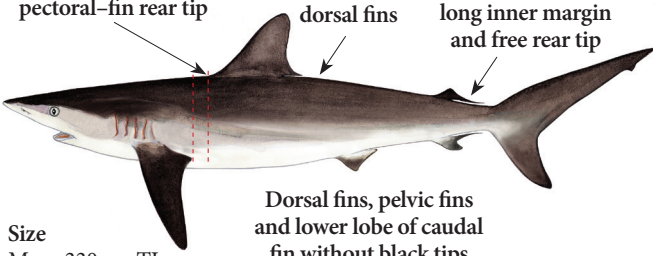
Carcharhinus falciformis

See also page 44

Origin of 1st dorsal fin well behind pectoral–fin rear tip

A ridge on back between dorsal fins

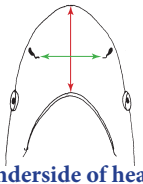
2nd dorsal fin very low, and with very long inner margin and free rear tip



Dorsal fins, pelvic fins and lower lobe of caudal fin without black tips

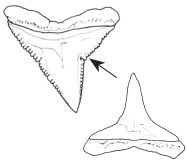
Size
Max.: 330 cm TL

Snout shorter, preoral length 1.2–1.6 times internarial width



Underside of head

Upper teeth strongly notched in one side



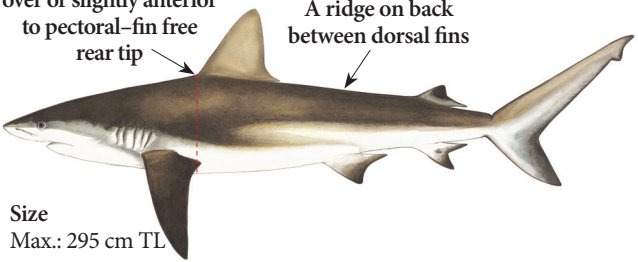
Upper and lower tooth

Carcharhinus perezi

See also page 50

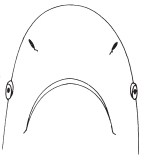
Origin of 1st dorsal fin over or slightly anterior to pectoral–fin free rear tip

A ridge on back between dorsal fins



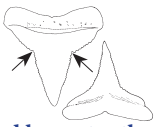
Size
Max.: 295 cm TL

Snout short and rounded, preoral length 1.0–1.1 times internarial width



Underside of head

Upper teeth serrated and notched on both sides

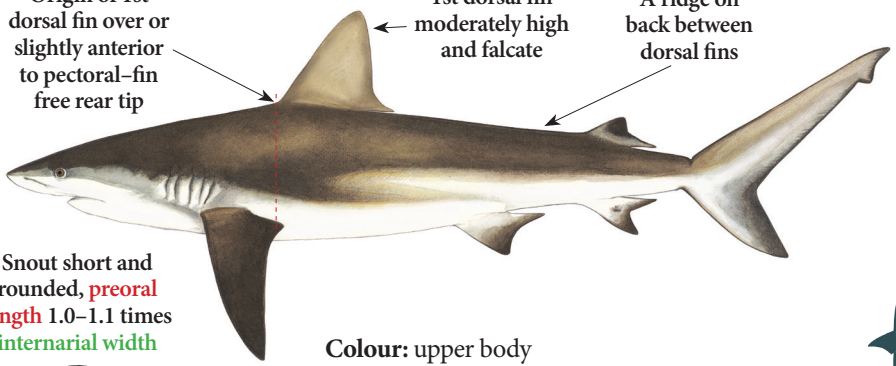


Upper and lower tooth

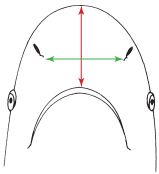
Carcharhinus perezi (Poey, 1876)

Caribbean reef shark – Requin de récif
Tiburón coralino

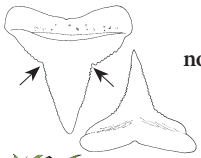
CCV



Snout short and rounded, preoral length 1.0–1.1 times internarial width



Underside of head



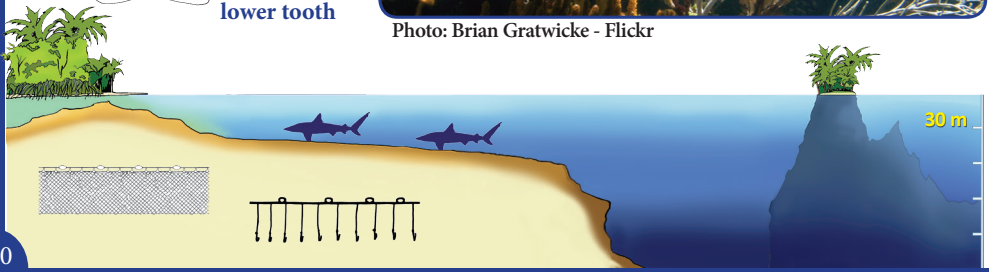
Upper teeth serrated and notched on both sides

Upper and lower tooth

Colour: upper body dark grey or grey–brown, white below; undersides of paired fins, anal and ventral caudal–fin lobe dusky.

Size
Max.: 295 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 152–168 cm TL, ♀ 200–295 cm TL
Birth: 70–73 cm TL

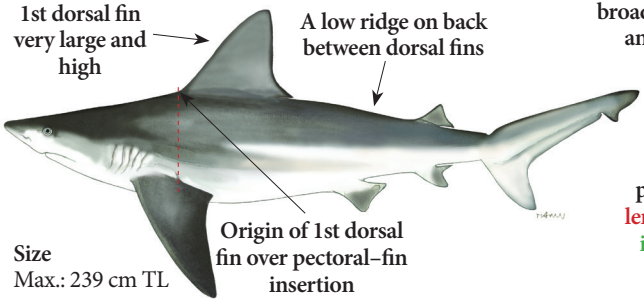
Photo: Brian Gratwicke - Flickr



Similar species

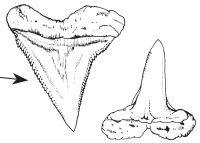
Carcharhinus plumbeus

See also page 52



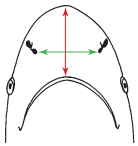
Size
Max.: 239 cm TL

Upper teeth broadly triangular and serrated



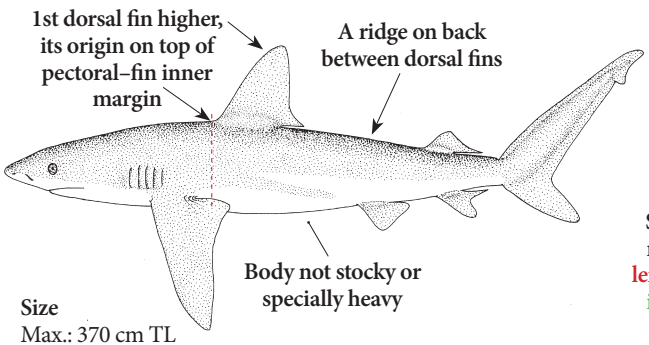
Upper and lower tooth

Snout broadly parabolic, preoral length 0.9–1.3 times internarial width



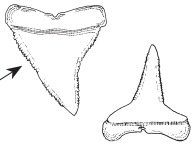
Underside of head

Carcharhinus galapagensis



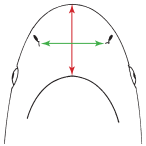
Size
Max.: 370 cm TL

Upper teeth nearly triangular in shape and serrated



Upper and lower tooth

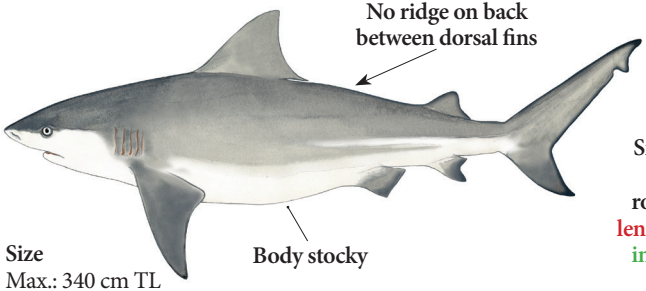
Snout longer and rounded, preoral length 1.0–1.3 times internarial width



Underside of head

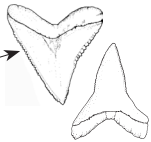
Carcharhinus leucas

See also page 46



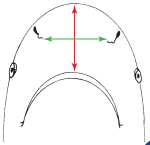
Size
Max.: 340 cm TL

Upper teeth large, broadly triangular, and heavily serrated



Upper and lower tooth

Snout very short and broadly rounded, preoral length 0.7–1.0 times internarial width

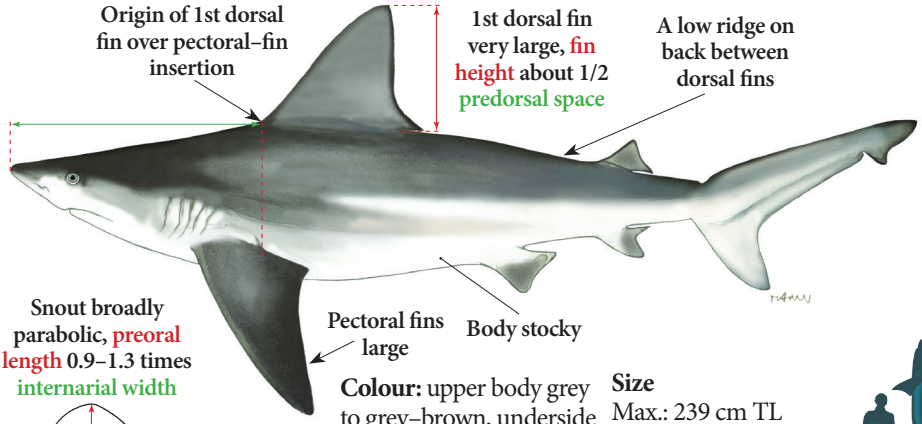


Underside of head

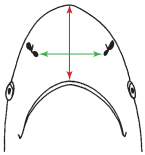
Carcharhinus plumbeus (Nardo, 1827)

Sandbar shark – Requin gris
Tiburón trozo

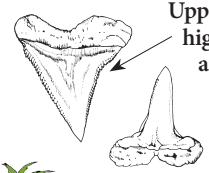
CCP



Snout broadly parabolic, preoral length 0.9–1.3 times internarial width



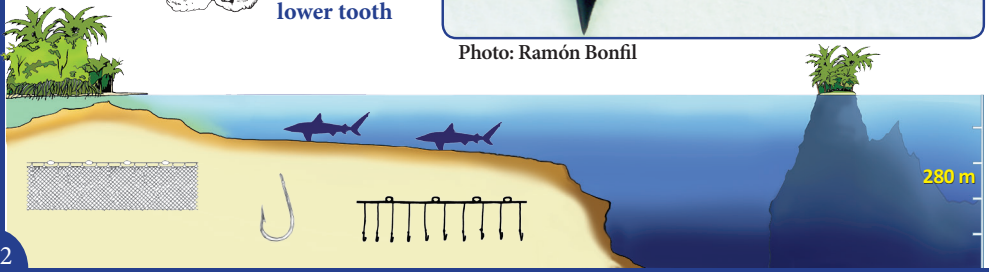
Underside of head



Colour: upper body grey to grey–brown, underside white; posterior edges of fins often dusky; a faint white band on flank.

Size
Max.: 239 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 131–178 cm TL, ♀ 144–183 cm TL
Birth: 56–75 cm TL

Photo: Ramón Bonfil

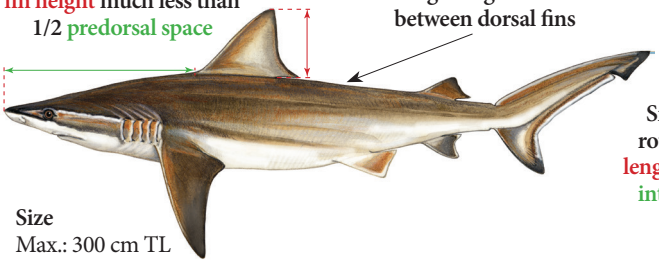


Similar species

Carcharhinus altimus

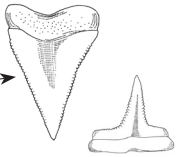
1st dorsal fin not as large, fin height much less than 1/2 predorsal space

A high ridge on back between dorsal fins



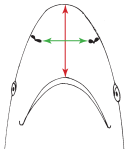
Size
Max.: 300 cm TL

Upper teeth with longer blades



Upper and lower tooth

Snout long and rounded, preoral length 1.3–1.4 times internarial width

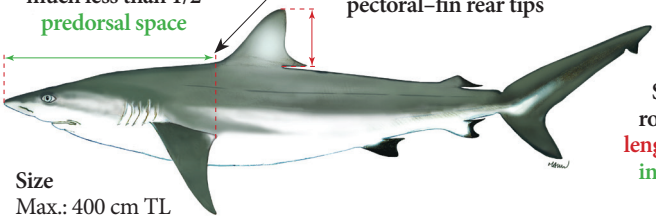


Underside of head

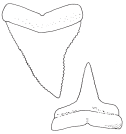
Carcharhinus obscurus

1st dorsal fin much smaller, fin height much less than 1/2 predorsal space

Origin of 1st dorsal fin on top or in front of pectoral–fin rear tips

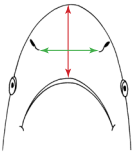


Size
Max.: 400 cm TL



Upper and lower tooth

Snout broadly rounded, preoral length 1.0–1.4 times internarial width



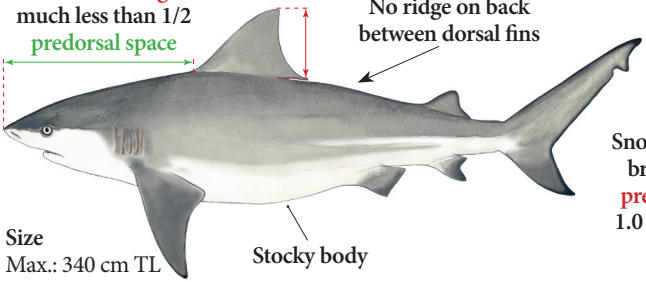
Underside of head

Carcharhinus leucas

See also page 46

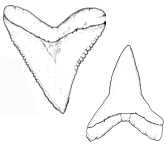
1st dorsal fin much smaller, fin height much less than 1/2 predorsal space

No ridge on back between dorsal fins



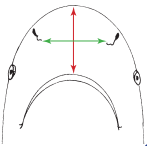
Stocky body

Size
Max.: 340 cm TL



Upper and lower tooth

Snout very short and broadly rounded, preoral length 0.7–1.0 times internarial width

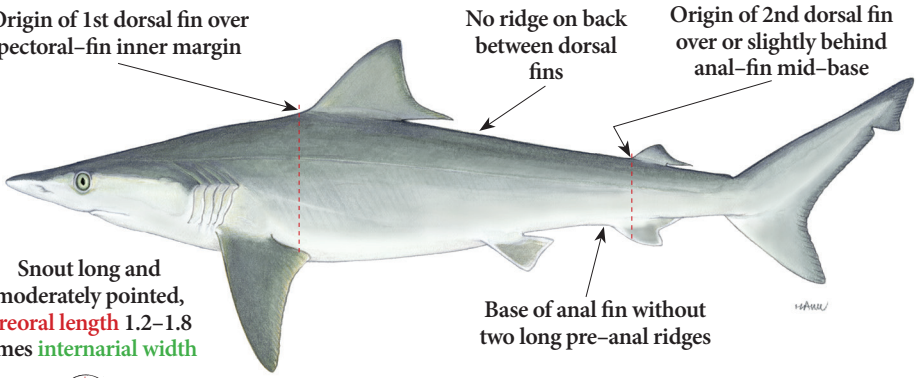


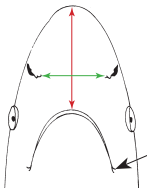
Underside of head

Carcharhinus porosus (Ranzani, 1839)

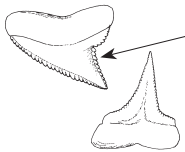
Smalltail shark – Requin tiqueue
Tiburón poroso

CCR





Underside of head

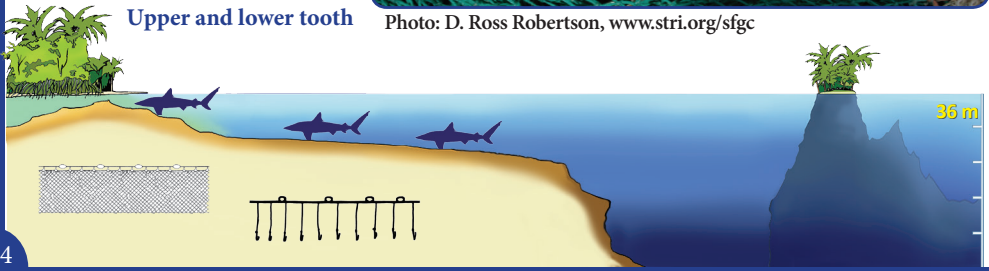


Upper and lower tooth

Colour: upper body grey, underside light; tips of pectoral, dorsal and caudal fins frequently dusky or blackish.

Size
Max.: 134 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 72–78 cm TL, ♀ 84 cm TL
Birth: 31–40 cm TL

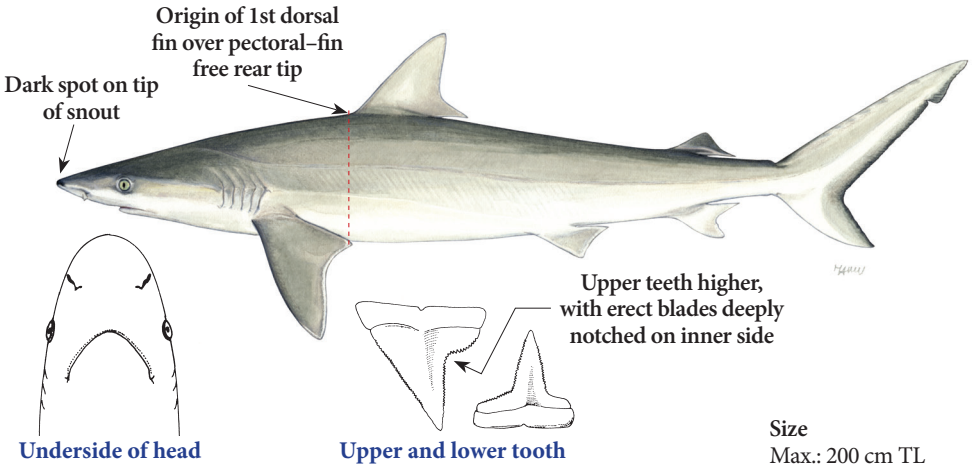
Photo: D. Ross Robertson, www.stri.org/sfgc



Similar species

Carcharhinus acronotus

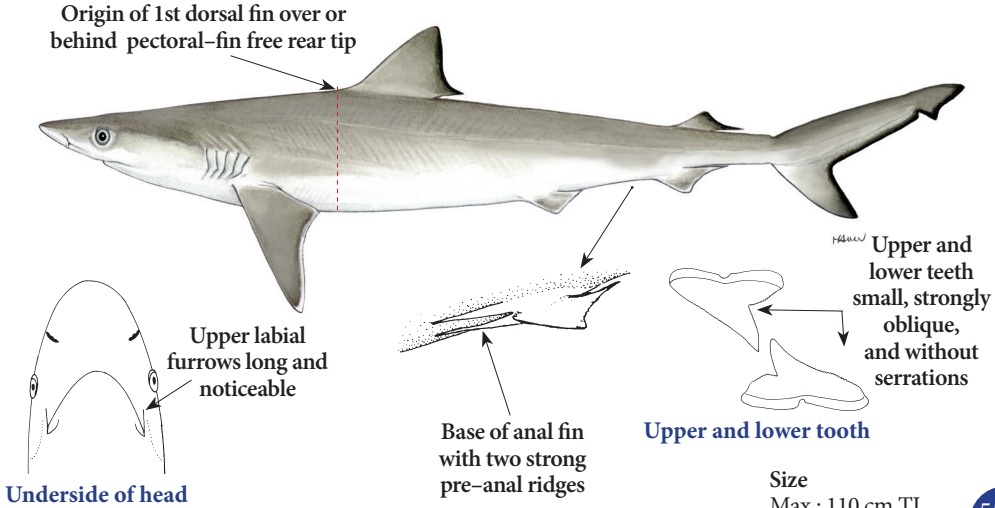
See also page 42



Size
Max.: 200 cm TL

Rhizoprionodon porosus

See also page 40

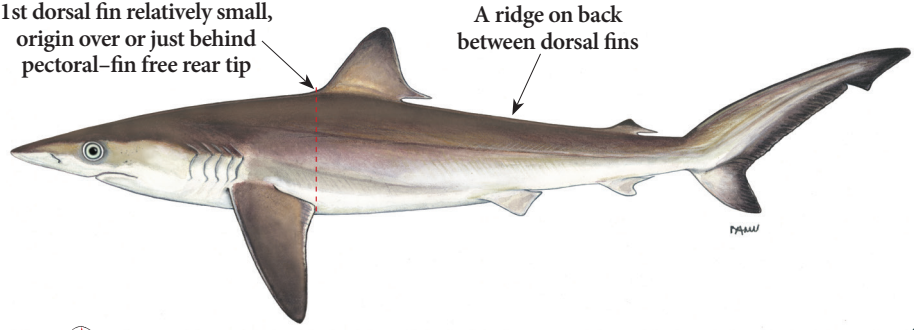


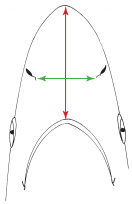
Size
Max.: 110 cm TL

Carcharhinus signatus (Poey, 1868)

Night shark – Requin de nuit
Tiburón nocturno

CCS



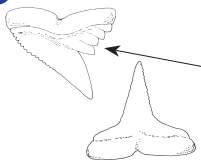


Underside of head

Snout very long and narrowly rounded, preoral length 1.7–1.9 times internarial width

Colour: upper body dark grey, greyish brown, or bluish black (in life); underside greyish or white.

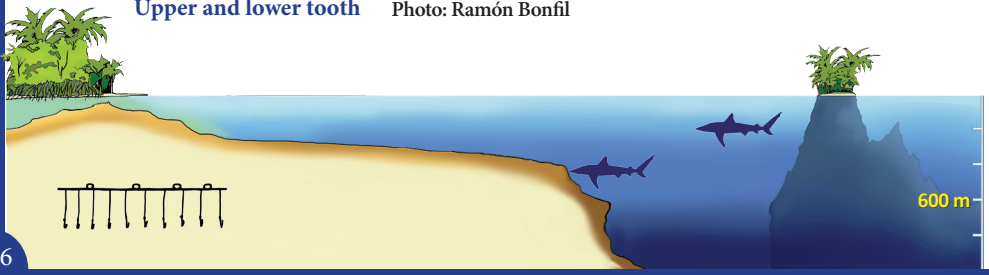
Size
Max.: 280 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 160–190 cm TL, ♀ 159–194 cm TL
Birth: 60–72 cm TL



Upper and lower tooth

Upper teeth with large oblique cusp and strong cusplets on the base

Photo: Ramón Bonfil

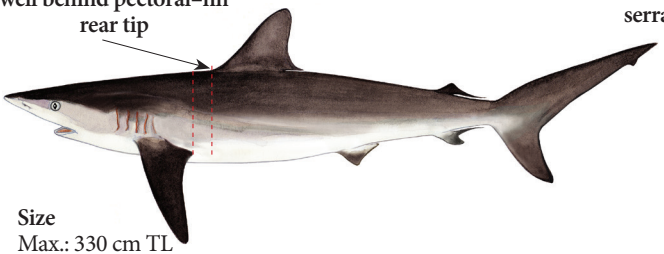


Similar species

Carcharhinus falciformis

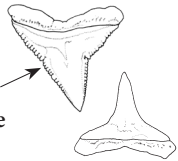
See also page 44

Origin of 1st dorsal fin well behind pectoral–fin rear tip



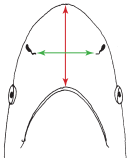
Size
Max.: 330 cm TL

Upper teeth strongly notched in one side, lightly notched in the other, with heavily serrated cusps and large serrations on bases



Upper and lower tooth

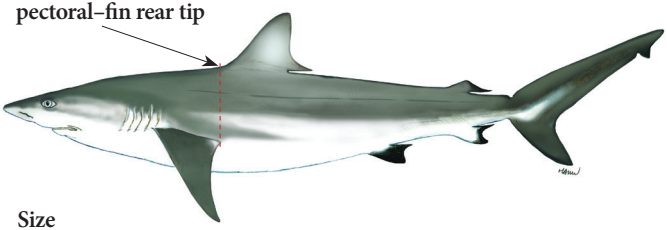
Snout shorter, preoral length 1.2–1.6 times internarial width



Underside of head

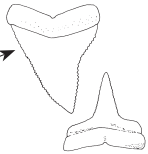
Carcharhinus obscurus

Origin of 1st dorsal fin on top or in front of pectoral–fin rear tip



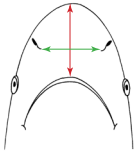
Size
Max.: 400 cm TL

Upper teeth nearly triangular in shape and serrated



Upper and lower tooth

Snout shorter, preoral length 1.0–1.4 times internarial width

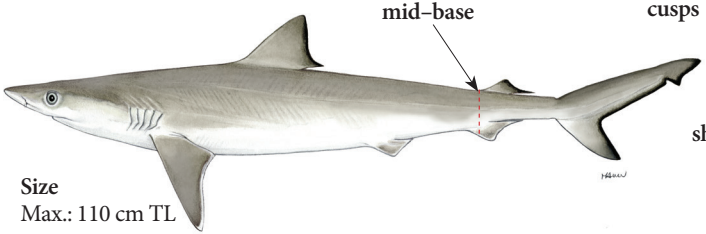


Underside of head

Rhizoprionodon porosus

See also page 40

Origin of 2nd dorsal fin over anal fin mid–base

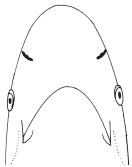


Size
Max.: 110 cm TL

Teeth not serrated, with strongly oblique cusps

Upper and lower tooth

Snout shorter and broader



Underside of head

Carcharhinus longimanus (Poey, 1861)

Oceanic whitetip shark – Requin océanique Tiburón oceánico

OCS

CITES App. II

CARCHARHINIDAE

1st dorsal fin very large, broadly rounded, with white blotches on tip

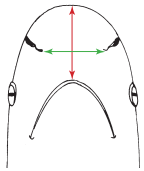
A low ridge on back between dorsal fins

Black spots, all fading in adults

Lower lobe of caudal fin often with white blotch

Snout short, broadly rounded
preoral length
1.0 to 1.1 times
internarial width

Pectoral fins very long, 19–29% of TL, broad and broadly rounded, with white blotches on tips

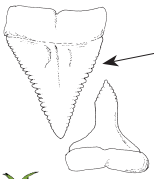


Underside of head

Colour: upper body dark grey to brown, underside whitish.

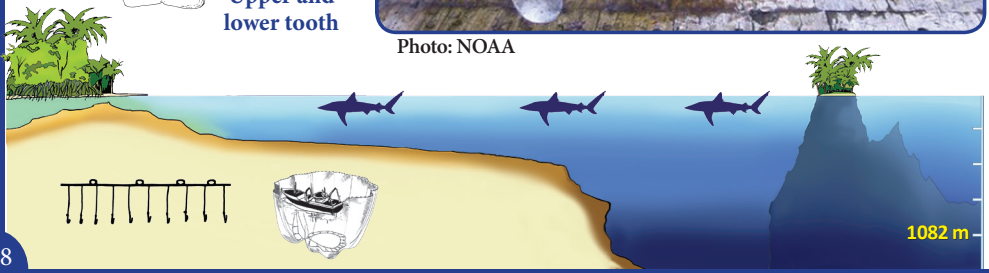
Size
Max.: 395 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 175–198 cm TL, ♀ 180–200 cm TL
Birth: 60–65 cm TL

Photo: NOAA



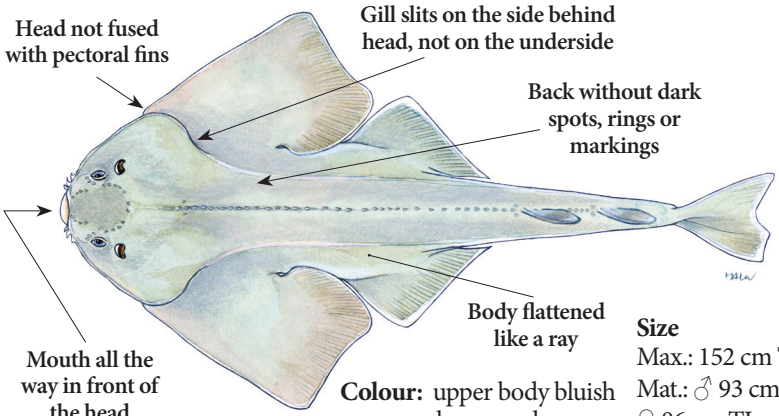
Upper teeth large, triangular and coarsely serrated

Upper and lower tooth



Squatina dumeril Lesueur, 1818
Sand devil – Ange de mer de sable
Tiburón ángel

SUD



Colour: upper body bluish grey or ashy grey when fresh; underside white.

Size
Max.: 152 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 93 cm TL, ♀ 86 cm TL
Birth: 25–30 cm TL

SQUATINIDAE

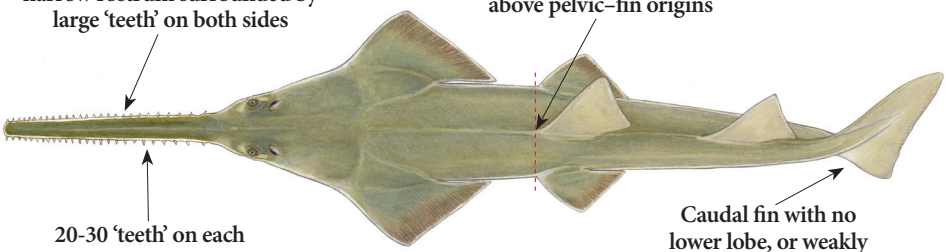
Frontal view of head

Photo: NOAA

Pristis pectinata Latham, 1794
Smalltooth sawfish – Poisson-scie tident Pejepeine

RPP

CITES App. I



Size
Max.: 550 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 370 cm TL, ♀ 415 cm TL
Birth: 69–84 cm TL

Colour: upper body greyish brown, olive-brown or blackish brown; ventral surface white to greyish white.

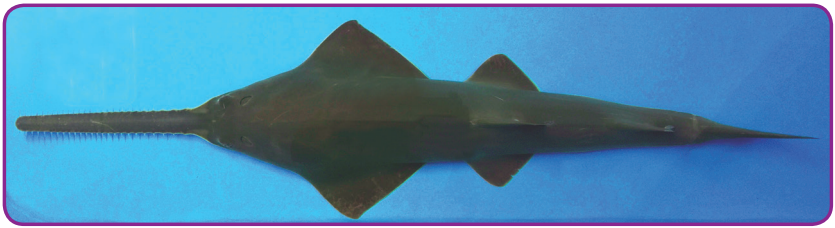


Photo: Ramón Bonfil

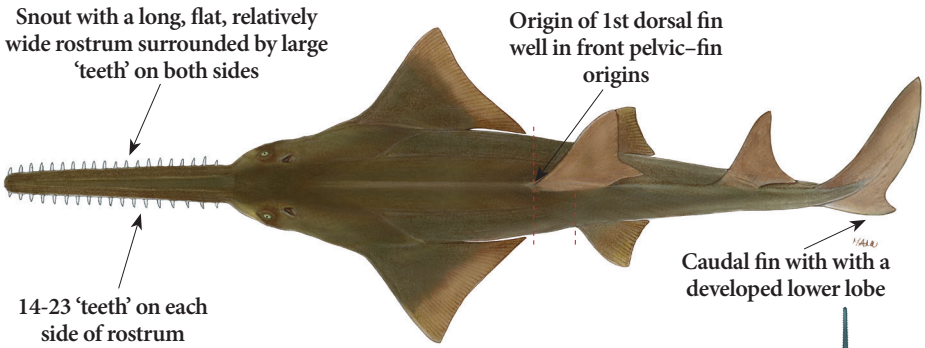
Pristis pristis (Linnaeus, 1758)

Common sawfish – Poisson–scie commun

Pez sierra común

RPR

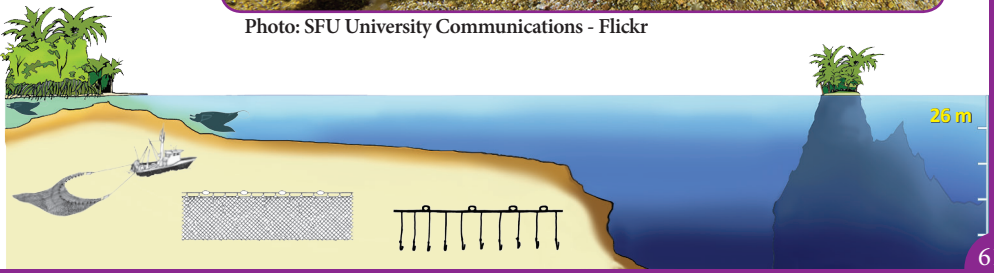
CITES App. I



Size
Max.: 700 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 280–300 cm TL, ♀ 300 cm TL
Birth: 73–80 cm TL

Colour: upper body uniformly brownish, underside uniformly whitish.

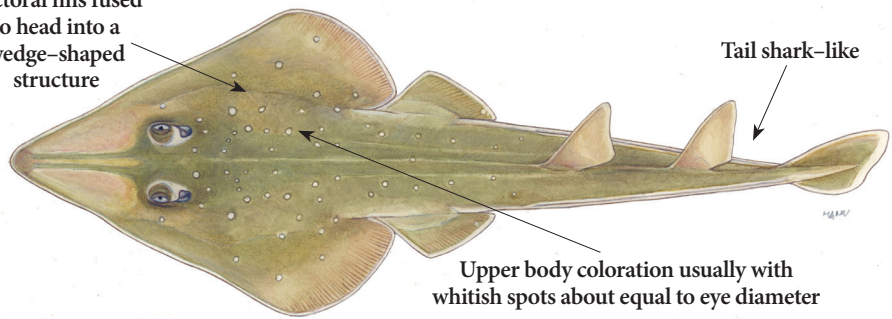
Photo: SFU University Communications - Flickr

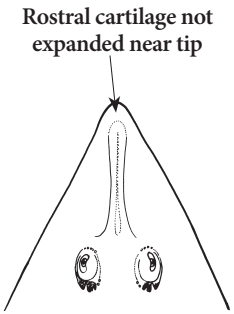


PRISTIDAE

Rhinobatos percellens (Walbaum, 1792)
Chola guitarfish – Poisson–guitare chola
Guitarra chola

GUD



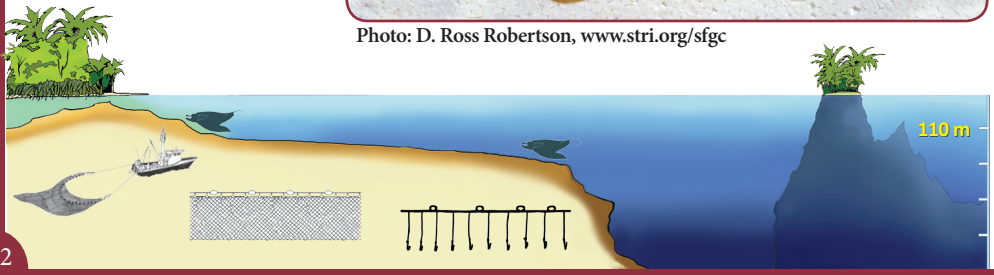


Dorsal view of head

Colour: upper body olive grey to brown or reddish, with darker brown blotches occasionally present, and cream coloured spots about equal to eye diameter; underside pale yellowish.

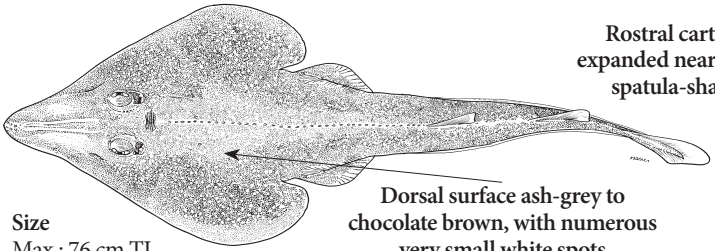
Size
Max.: 100 cm TL
Mat.: ♂ 55 cm TL, ♀ 58 cm TL
Birth: 20 cm TL

Photo: D. Ross Robertson, www.stri.org/sfgc



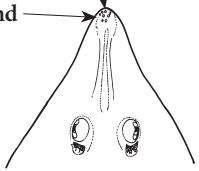
Similar species

Rhinobatos lentiginosus



Enlarged tubercles on dorsal side of snout (except small juveniles)

Rostral cartilage expanded near tip and spatula-shaped



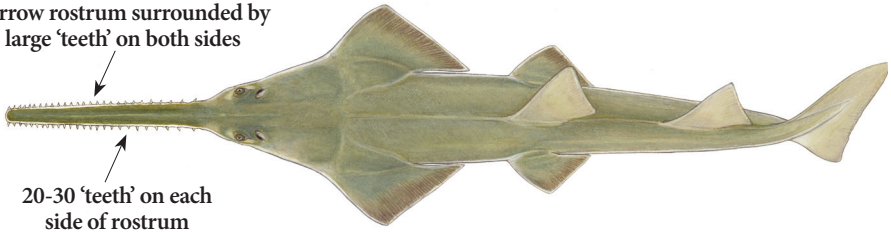
Dorsal view of head

Size
Max.: 76 cm TL

Pristis pectinata

See also page 60

Snout with a long, flat, relatively narrow rostrum surrounded by large 'teeth' on both sides



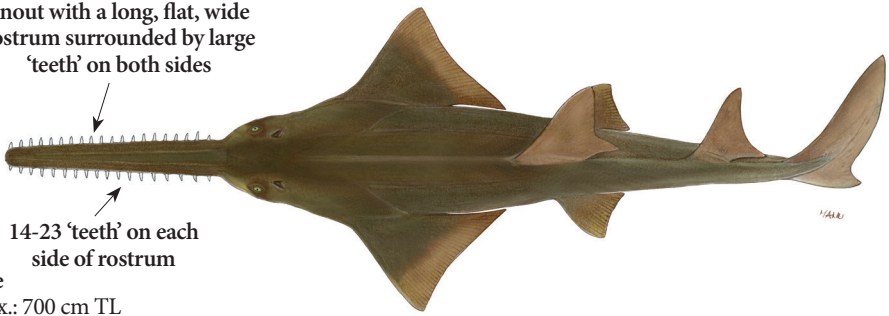
20-30 'teeth' on each side of rostrum

Size
Max.: 550 cm TL

Pristis pristis

See also page 61

Snout with a long, flat, wide rostrum surrounded by large 'teeth' on both sides



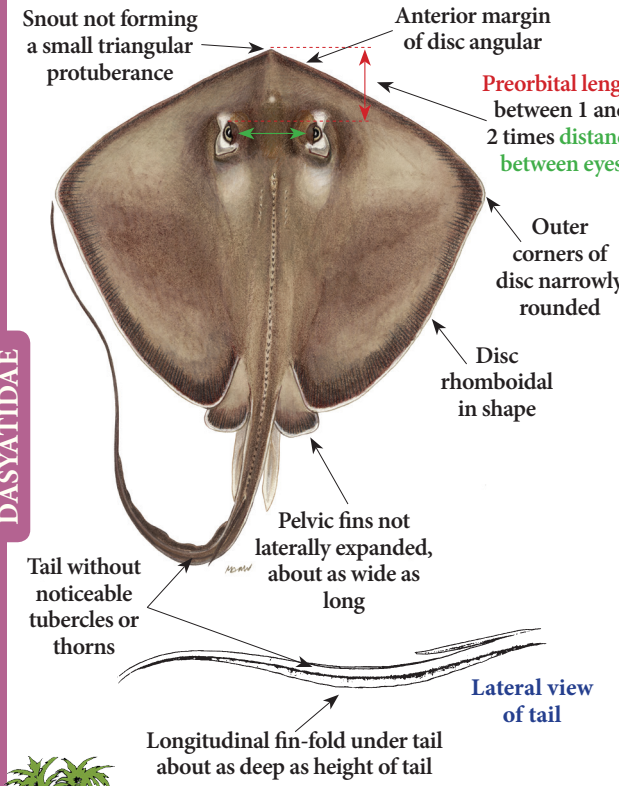
14-23 'teeth' on each side of rostrum

Size
Max.: 700 cm TL

Dasyatis americana Hildebrand and Schroeder, 1928

Southern stingray – Pastenague américaine
Raya látigo americana

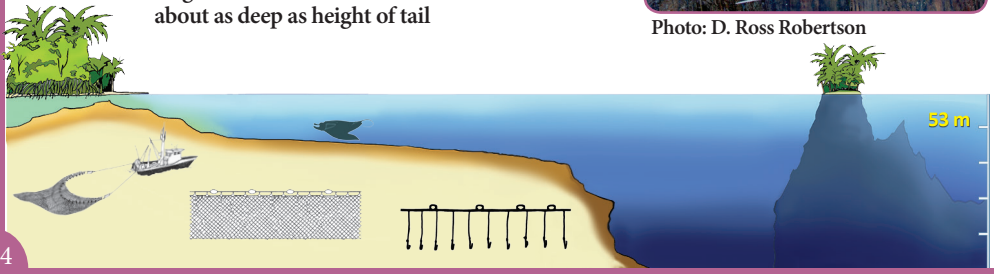
RDA



Colour: upper body light brown, grey, or olive, with pale spot on midline of snout in front of eyes. Underside white with grey or brown margins.

Size
Max.: 150 cm DW
Mat.: ♂ 51 cm DW,
♀ 75–80 cm DW
Birth: 17–18 cm DW

Photo: D. Ross Robertson



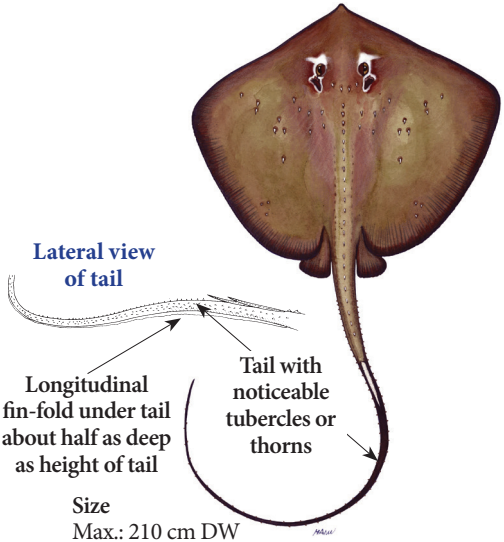
Similar species

Dasyatis guttata

See also page 66

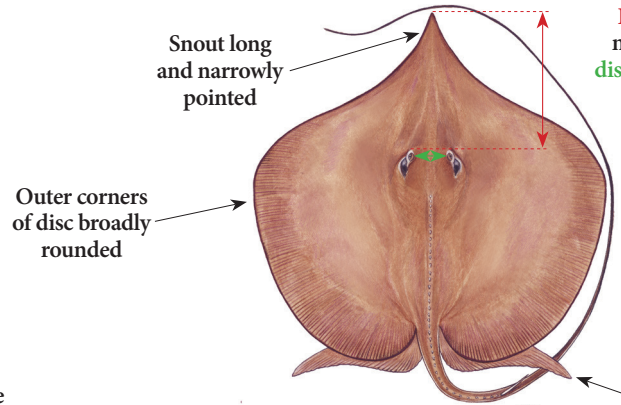
Size
Max.: 200 cm DW

Dasyatis centroura



Size
Max.: 210 cm DW

Dasyatis geijskesi

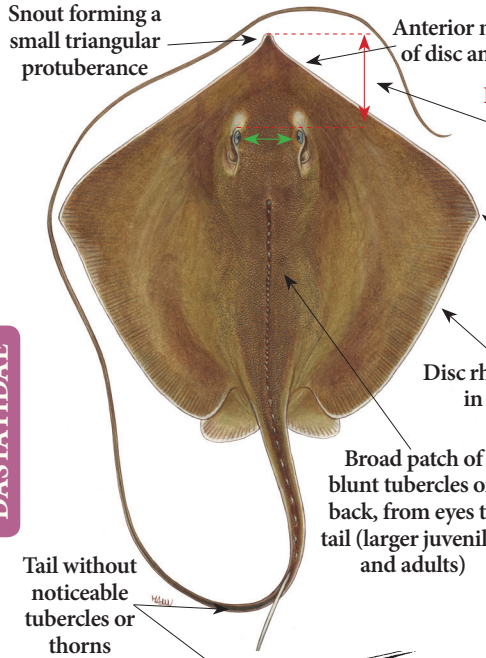


Size
Max.: 150 cm DW

Dasyatis guttata (Bloch and Schneider, 1801)

Longnose stingray – Pastenague longnez
Raya-látigo hocicona

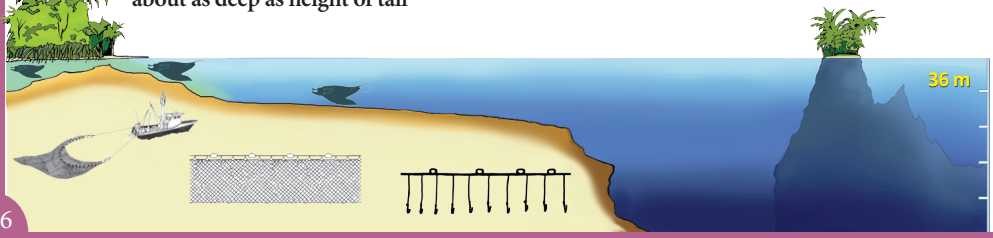
RDU



Colour: upper body grey, brown, or olive, either uniform or with dark spots; underside whitish; keel and ridge of tail black.

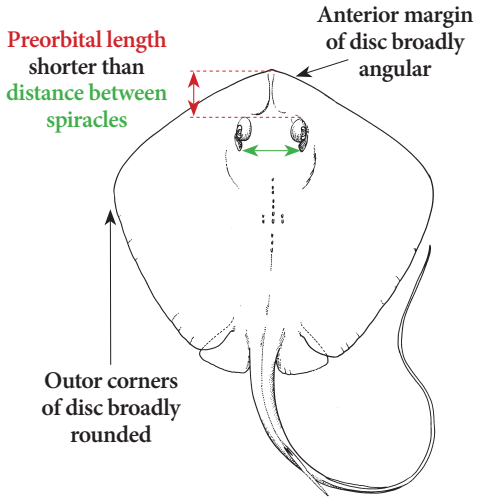
Size
Max.: 200 cm DW
Mat.: ♂ 41–46 cm DW, ♀ 50–55 cm DW
Birth: 12–15 cm DW

Photo: D. Ross Robertson, www.stri.org/sfgc



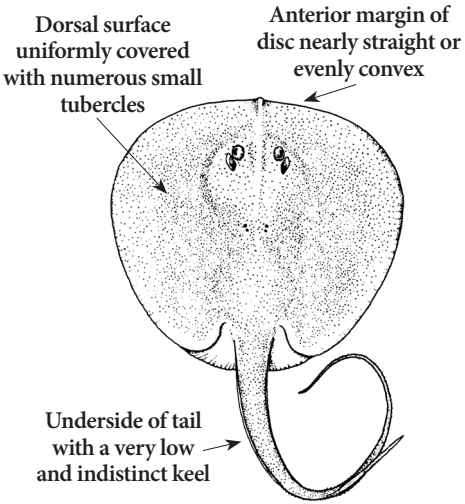
Similar species

Dasyatis say



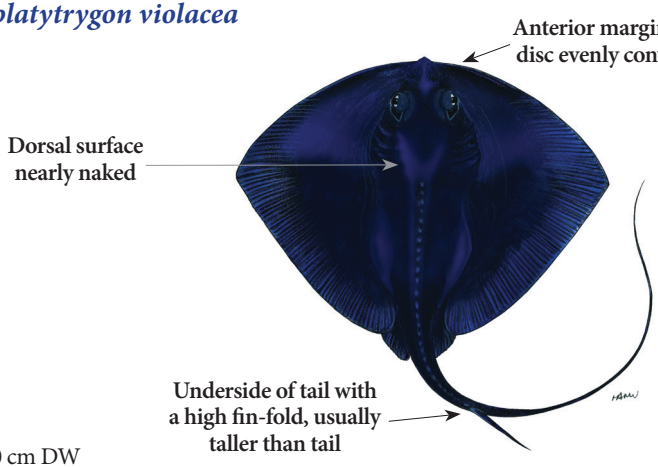
Size
Max.: 100 cm DW

Himantura schmardae



Size
Max.: 120 cm DW

Pteroplatytrygon violacea

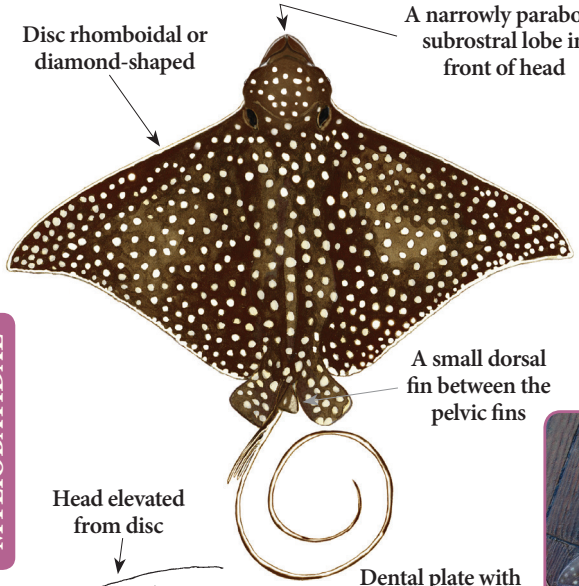


Size
Max.: 80 cm DW

Aetobatus narinari (Euphrasen, 1790)

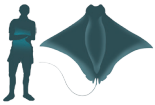
Spotted eagle ray – Aigle de mer leopard
Chucho pintado

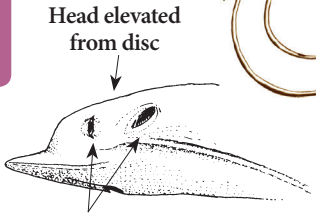
MAE



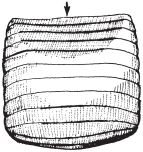
Colour: upper body grey to brown, with variable whitish spots (rounded, elliptical, or annular); underside white.

Size
Max.: 230 cm DW
Mat.: ♂ 100-115 cm DW,
♀ 150–160 cm DW
Birth: 18–36 cm DW



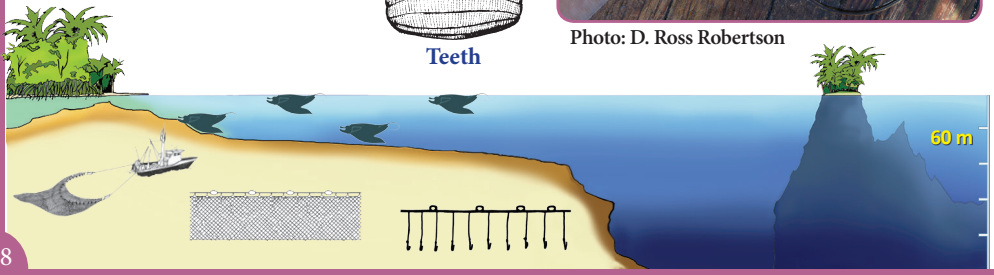


Lateral view of head



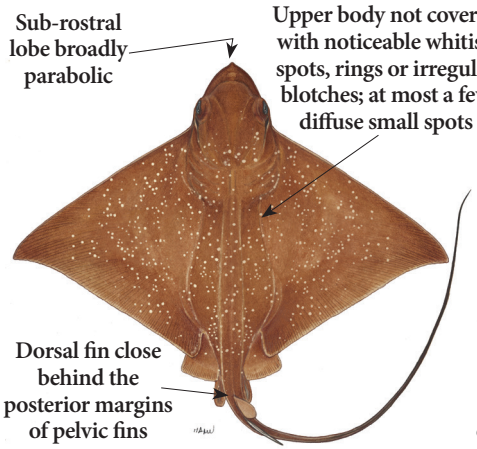
Teeth

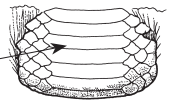
Photo: D. Ross Robertson



Similar species

Myliobatis freminvillii



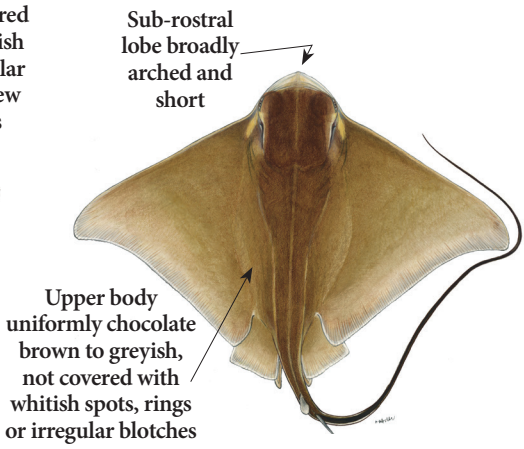


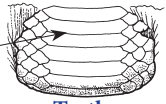
Teeth

Size
Max.: 86 cm DW

Myliobatis goodei

See also page 70

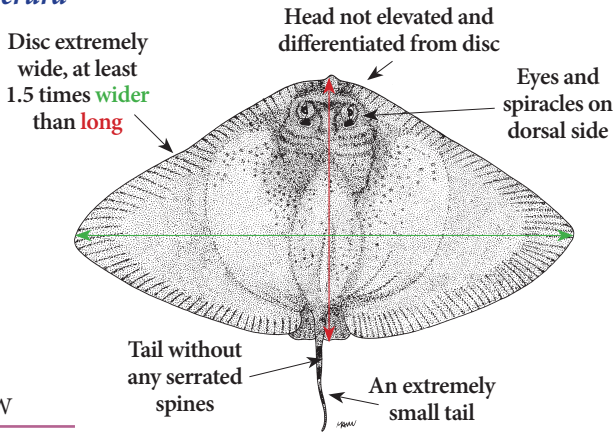




Teeth

Size
Max.: 99 cm DW

Gymnura micrura

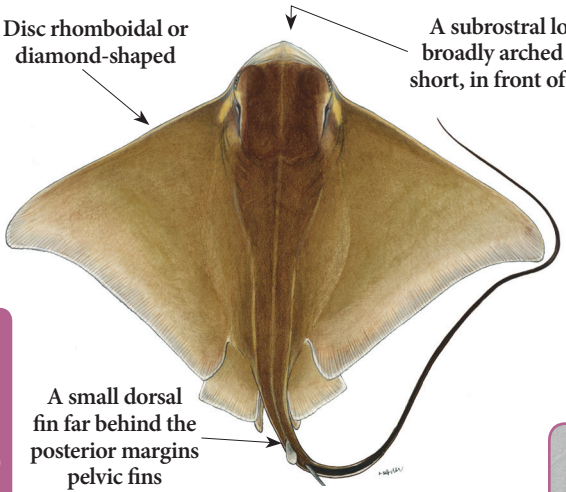


Size
Max.: 120 cm DW

Myliobatis goodei Garman, 1885

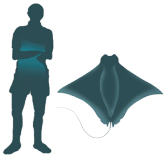
Southern eagle ray
Raya águila chata

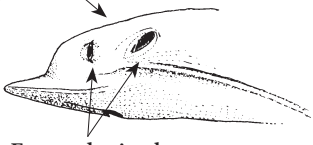
MYO



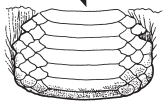
Colour: upper body uniformly chocolate brown to greyish, without spots; underside brownish white with dusky edges on disc.

Size
Max.: 99 cm DW
Mat.: ♂ 45 cm DW,
♀ N/A
Birth: N/A



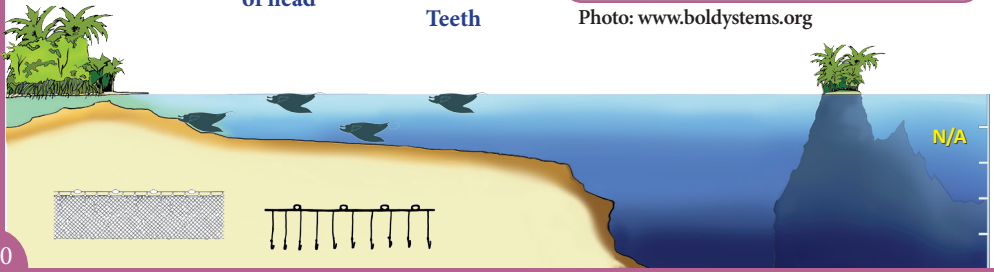


Lateral view of head



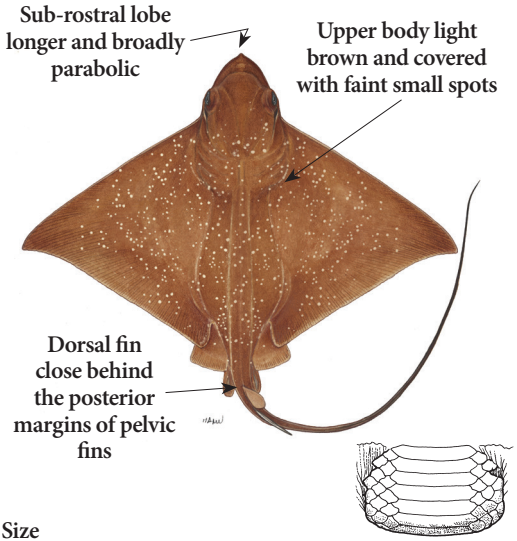
Teeth

Photo: www.boldystems.org



Similar species

Myliobatis freminvillii

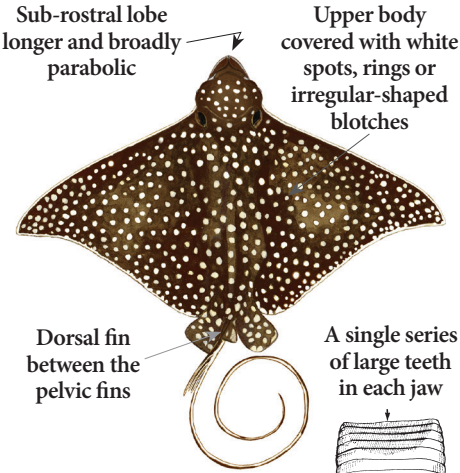


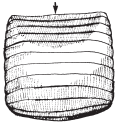
Teeth

Size
Max.: 86 cm DW

Aetobatus narinari

See also page 68

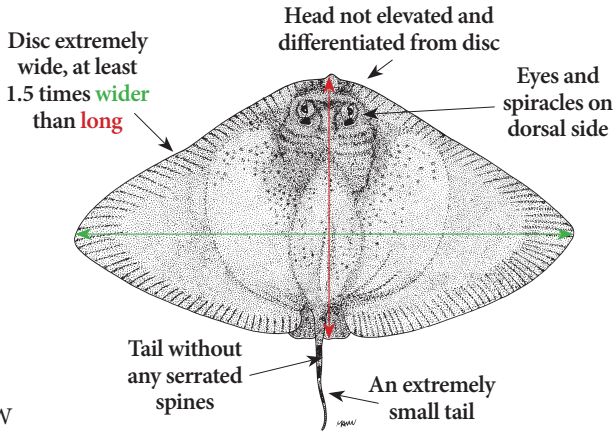




Teeth

Size
Max.: 230 cm DW

Gymnura micrura

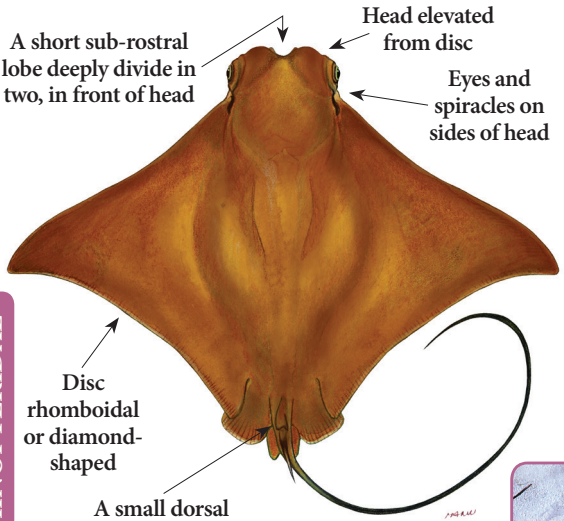


Size
Max.: 120 cm DW

Rhinoptera bonasus (Mitchill, 1815)

Cownose ray – Mourine américaine Mancha

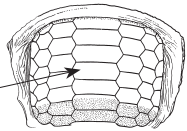
MRB



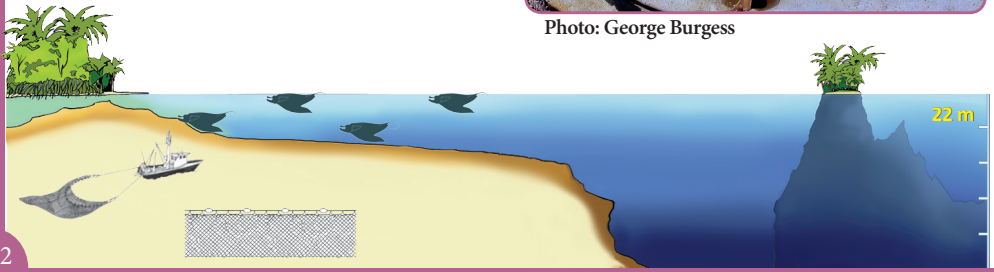
Colour: dorsal surface uniformly olive-brown to yellowish-brown; underside white to yellowish.

Size
Max.: 107 cm DW
Mat.: ♂ 64–70 cm DW, ♀ 75–85 cm DW
Birth: 25–40 cm DW

Photo: George Burgess

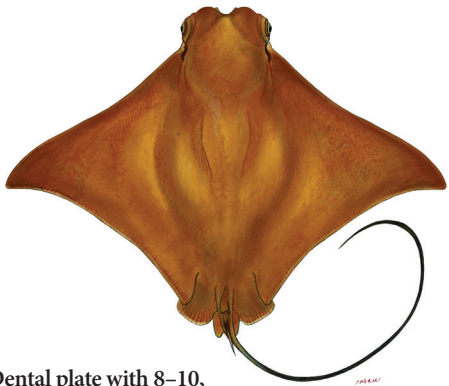


Teeth

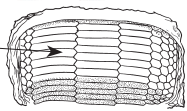


Similar species

Rhinoptera brasiliensis



Dental plate with 8–10, usually 9 rows of teeth, including 3 rows of wider central teeth

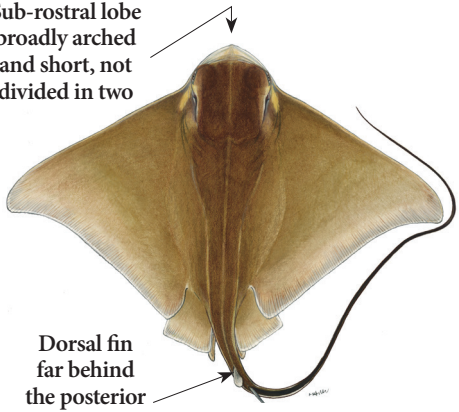


Teeth

Size
Max.: 102 cm DW

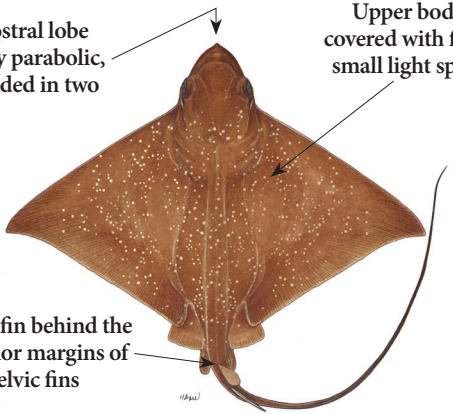
Myliobatis goodei

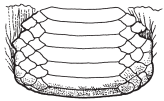
See also page 70



Size
Max.: 99 cm DW

Myliobatis freminvilii





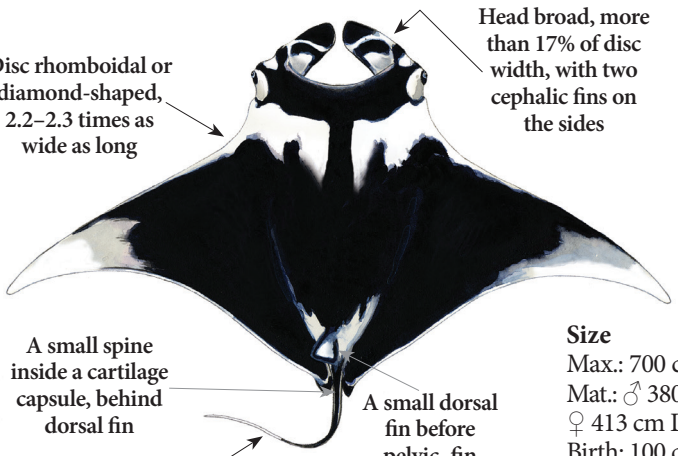
Teeth

Size
Max.: 86 cm DW

Manta birostris (Walbaum, 1792)
Giant manta – Mante géante
Manta gigante

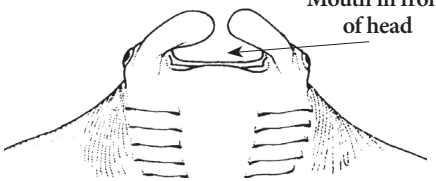
RMB

CITES App. II



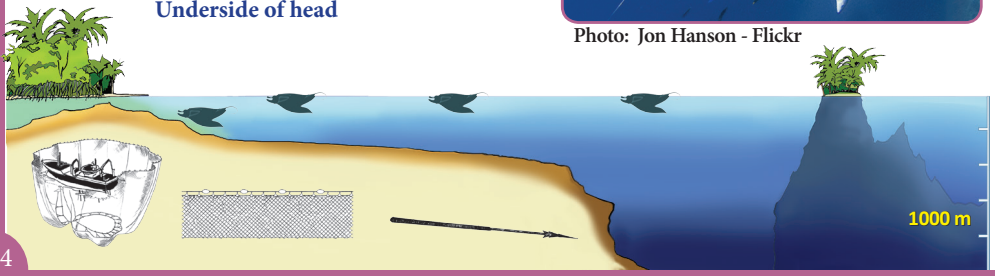
Colour: upper body black to charcoal grey; white 'shoulder' patches; V-shaped patch in front on dorsal fin; white edges on pectoral fin tips. Underside white, with wide dusky bands on posterior edge of pectoral fins.

Size
Max.: 700 cm DW
Mat.: ♂ 380 cm DW, ♀ 413 cm DW
Birth: 100 cm DW



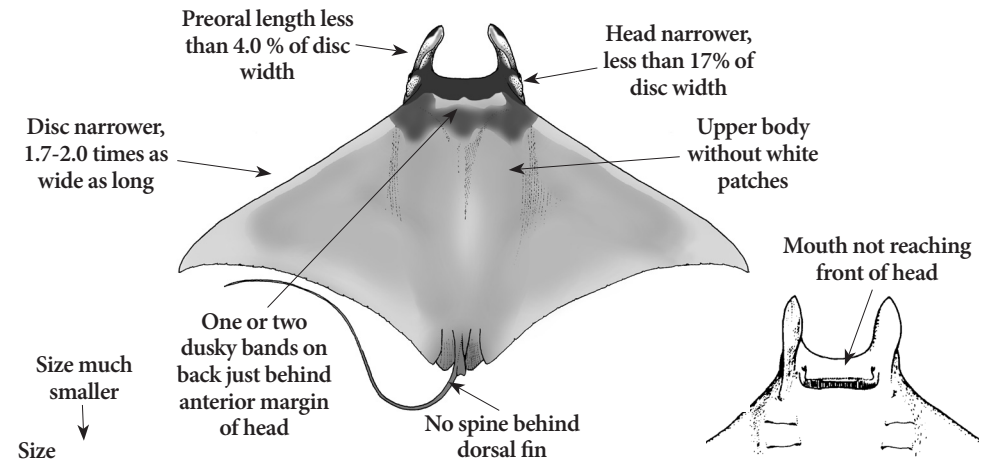
Underside of head

Photo: Jon Hanson - Flickr



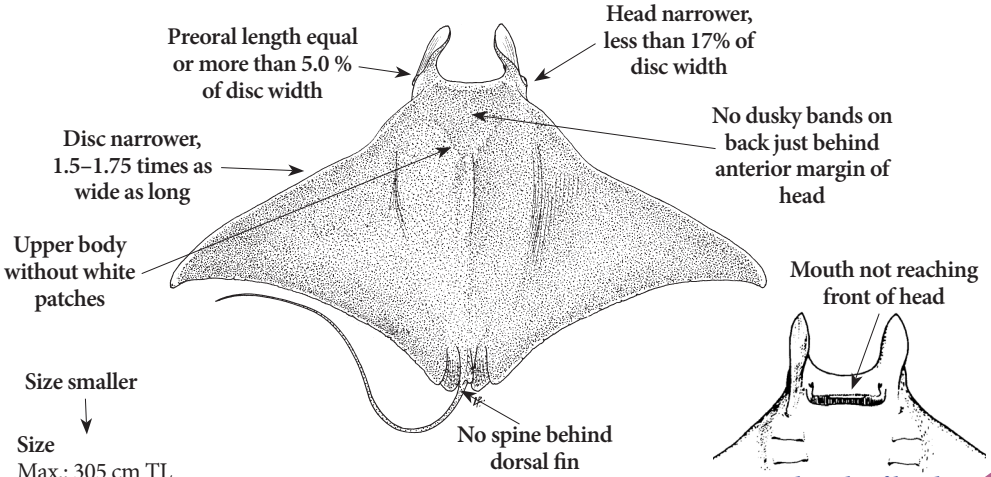
Similar species

Mobula hypostoma



Size
Max.: 120 cm TL

Mobula tarapacana



Size
Max.: 305 cm TL

SHARK SPECIES INCLUDED IN THE GUIDE

RAY SPECIES INCLUDED IN THE GUIDE

This identification guide includes a selection of shark and ray species occurring in the Wider Caribbean Region, that is the waters of the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and the waters of the Atlantic Ocean adjacent thereto. In total, 41 shark and 20 ray species are included. These species were selected because of their relevance to commercial fisheries or vulnerability to exploitation due to their life history characteristics. Of these, 29 shark and 9 ray species are presented in a full species card and depicted with a colour illustration and photo. Short accounts of 12 shark and 11 ray species that are less common in the region and could be misidentified with more common species, are also included.

This guide is intended to help fishery workers collecting catch data in the field in the identification of the sharks and rays they might encounter for the specific purpose of improving the quality of catch and landings data. The guide is expected to be useful also for fisheries inspectors, observers and enforcement officers of the navy, coastguard and customs.

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