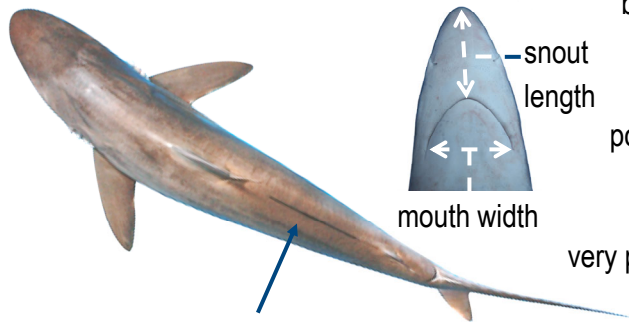




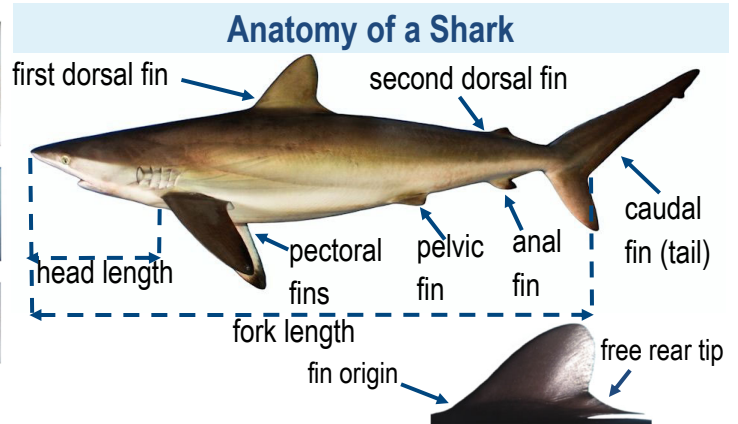
# PROHIBITED SHARK IDENTIFICATION

FOR THE FISHERIES OF THE U.S. ATLANTIC, GULF OF MEXICO, AND CARIBBEAN

Less common prohibited sharks not pictured: **Whale, Basking, Bigeye Sand Tiger, Sixgill, Bigeye Sixgill, Sevengill, Galapagos, Caribbean Sharpnose, Narrowtooth, and Smalltail Sharks**

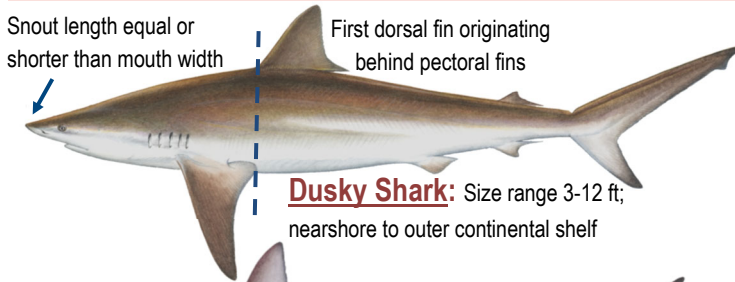


Ridgeback sharks have an interdorsal ridge (a visible line or crease of raised skin between dorsal fins)

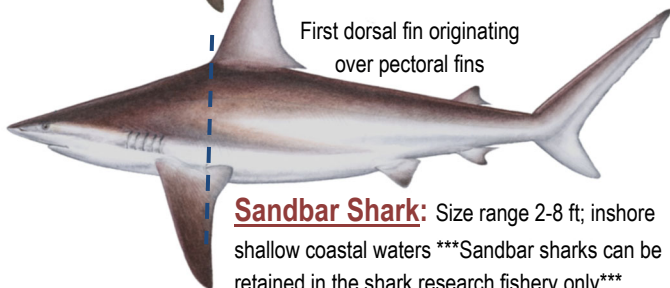


## Ridgeback Sharks (also known as “Brown” or “Sand” Sharks)

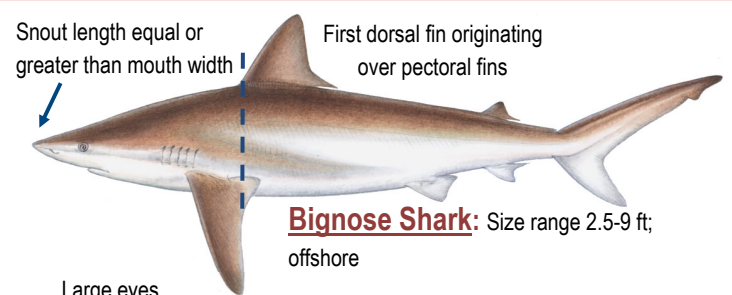
All Ridgeback Sharks Are Prohibited, except for **Tiger, Oceanic Whitetip, and Smoothhound Sharks**



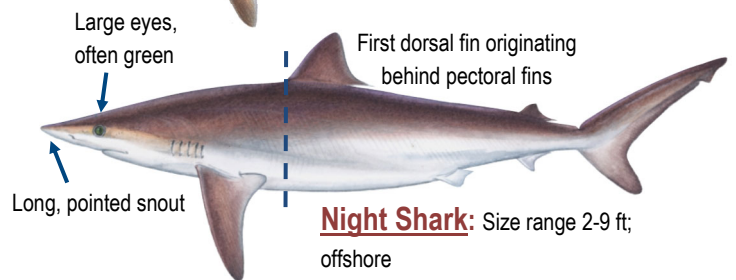
**Dusky Shark:** Size range 3-12 ft; nearshore to outer continental shelf



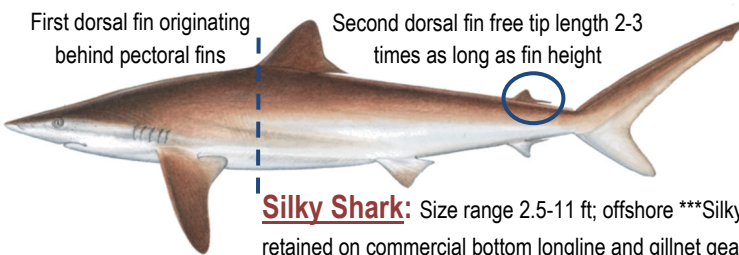
**Sandbar Shark:** Size range 2-8 ft; inshore shallow coastal waters \*\*\*Sandbar sharks can be retained in the shark research fishery only\*\*\*



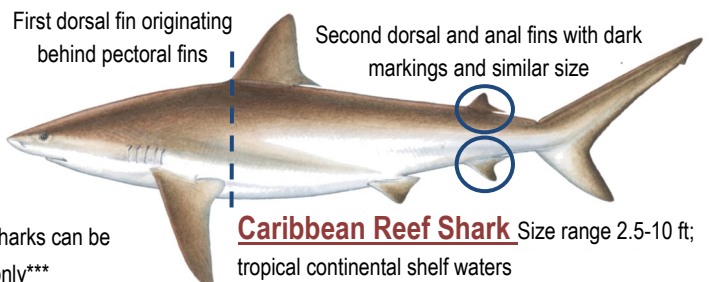
**Bignose Shark:** Size range 2.5-9 ft; offshore



**Night Shark:** Size range 2-9 ft; offshore



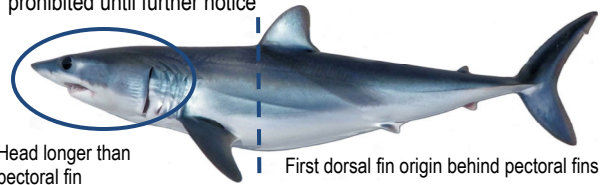
**Silky Shark:** Size range 2.5-11 ft; offshore \*\*\*Silky sharks can be retained on commercial bottom longline and gillnet gear only\*\*\*



**Caribbean Reef Shark** Size range 2.5-10 ft; tropical continental shelf waters

## Commonly Encountered Prohibited Non-Ridgeback Sharks

**Shortfin Mako:** Max size 12 ft; offshore \*\*\*Shortfin mako retention is prohibited until further notice\*\*\*



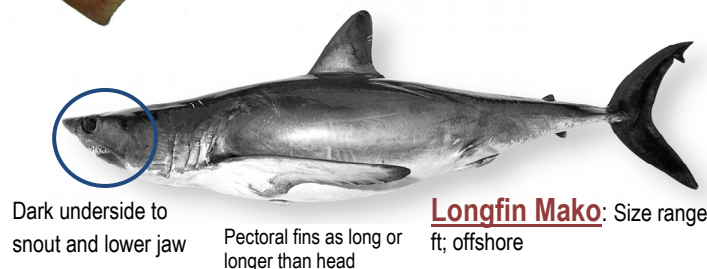
**Atlantic Angel Shark:** Size range 2.5-5 ft; shallow to deep water



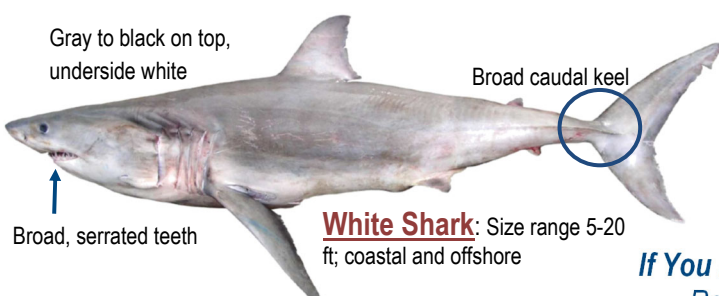
Flattened body, wide pectoral and pelvic fins



**Sand Tiger:** Size range 3.5-10 ft; surf zone and shallow bays to outer continental shelf



**Longfin Mako:** Size range 7-13 ft; offshore



**White Shark:** Size range 5-20 ft; coastal and offshore



**Bigeye Thresher:** Size range 3-10 ft fork length; mostly offshore

**If You Don't know, Let it Go  
Release Ridgebacks**

All sharks within a species are not identical; however, these are common characteristics for the majority of individuals.  
Young sharks can vary in appearance from adults. Size ranges are approximate.

Prepared by L. Latchford, C. Hutt, T. Curtis, and S.G. Redding. National Marine Fisheries Service. <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms>.  
Photographs and/or illustrations provided by NMFS, NMFS Apex Predators Program, Diane Peebles, W.B. Driggers III, and S. Iglésias.

June 2022



# PRACTICING SAFE CATCH AND RELEASE

THE FOLLOWING ARE RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR RELEASING SHARKS FROM A VESSEL

1. To maximize survival, **keep the shark in the water**. Use heavy fishing tackle to minimize fight time. This will increase its chances for survival after release.



2. Place a measuring device along the side of the vessel so the shark can be measured in the water.



3. Remove the hook using a dehooking device. If you cannot remove the hook, or if removing the hook would cause danger to yourself or the shark, cut the leader as close to the hook as safety permits to minimize any trailing gear, or cut the hook itself with bolt cutters.



4. Do not gaff a shark that you plan on releasing. Use the leader to hold the shark at boatside with its head oriented into the current.



5. When releasing the shark, allow water to flow over the gills by moving the shark forward in the water, or by positioning the shark so the current flows toward the head of the animal, until its energy returns.

**ALL PROHIBITED SHARKS, INCLUDING DUSKY SHARKS, MUST BE RELEASED IN THE WATER WITH A MINIMUM OF HARM.**

*If You Don't Know, Let it Go*  
*Release Ridgebacks*

Photographs provided by NMFS and Mark Sampson

