

Shark Identification

If you don't know, let it go

and Federal Regulations for the Recreational Fishery of the U.S. Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean

Anatomy of a Shark

blunt

pointed

very pointed

snout length

mouth width

tooth

first dorsal fin

second dorsal fin

fin origin

Free rear tip

second dorsal fin

caudal fin (tail)

keel

tail

head length

fork length

pectoral fins

pelvic fin

anal fin

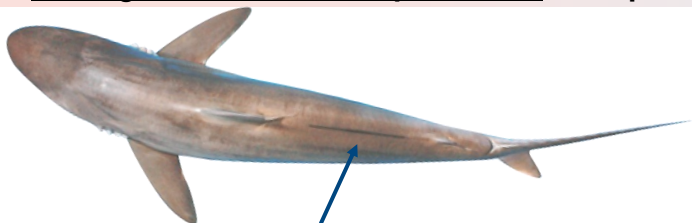
Federal fishing permit required in Federal waters | Purchase at hmspermits.noaa.gov

HMS recreational permit holders that fish for sharks will need to obtain a shark endorsement.

Authorized Species	Minimum Size (fork length)	Bag Limit (per trip)
Smoothhound shark	None	None
Atlantic sharpnose shark	None	1 per person
Bonnethead	None	1 per person
Hammerheads (great, scalloped, and smooth)	78 inches	1 per vessel (Hammerhead or Other shark)
Other sharks	54 inches	

Recreational anglers fishing for sharks are required to use non-offset, non-stainless steel circle hooks when fishing south of 41° 43' N (near Chatham, MA), except when fishing with flies or artificial lures.

All ridgeback sharks are prohibited, except for Tiger, Oceanic Whitetip, or Smoothhound Sharks



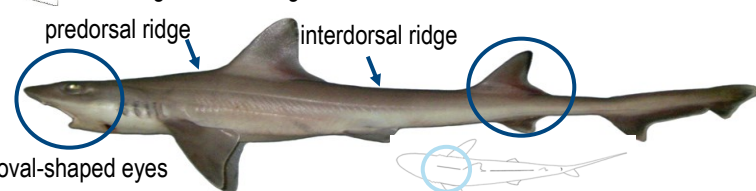
Ridgeback Sharks are sharks with an **interdorsal ridge** (a visible line, or crease of raised skin between dorsal fins)



blunt snout

caudal keel

Tiger Shark: Snout length much shorter than mouth width; markings fade with age; max. size 15 feet; coastal and offshore



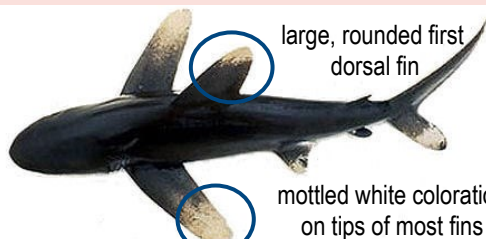
predorsal ridge

interdorsal ridge

oval-shaped eyes

Smoothhound: (a.k.a. smooth dogfish and Florida/Gulf smoothhound) Predorsal ridge present; second dorsal fin slightly smaller than first dorsal fin and much larger than anal fin; max. size 5 ft; coastal and offshore

Prohibited ridgeback sharks: Bignose, Caribbean Reef, Dusky, Galapagos, Night, Sandbar, and Silky Sharks. For more details on these species, refer to the Prohibited placard.

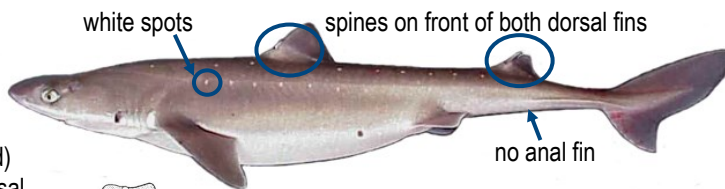


large, rounded first dorsal fin

mottled white coloration on tips of most fins

Oceanic Whitetip Shark: Young sharks have black mottling on most fins; does not always have interdorsal ridge; max. size 8 ft; offshore **Cannot be retained if tuna, swordfish, or billfish are onboard**

There are no recreational restrictions for Spiny Dogfish



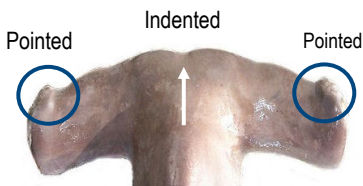
white spots

spines on front of both dorsal fins

no anal fin

Spiny Dogfish: Max. size 4 ft; coastal and offshore

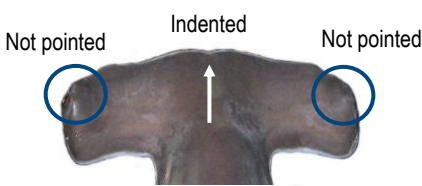
Scalloped Hammerheads, Great Hammerheads, and Smooth Hammerheads cannot be retained if tuna, swordfish, or billfish are onboard



Pointed

Indented

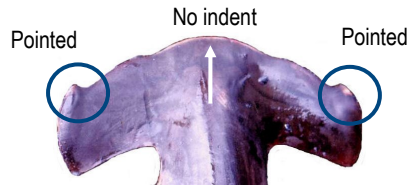
Pointed



Not pointed

Indented

Not pointed



Pointed

No indent

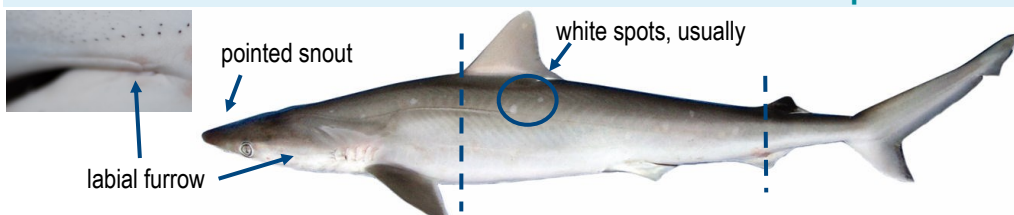
Pointed

Scalloped Hammerhead: Max. size 11 ft; coastal and offshore

Great Hammerhead: Max. size 15 ft; coastal and offshore

Smooth Hammerhead: Max. size 12 ft; coastal and offshore

There is no minimum size for Atlantic Sharpnose Sharks or Bonnetheads



pointed snout

white spots, usually

labial furrow

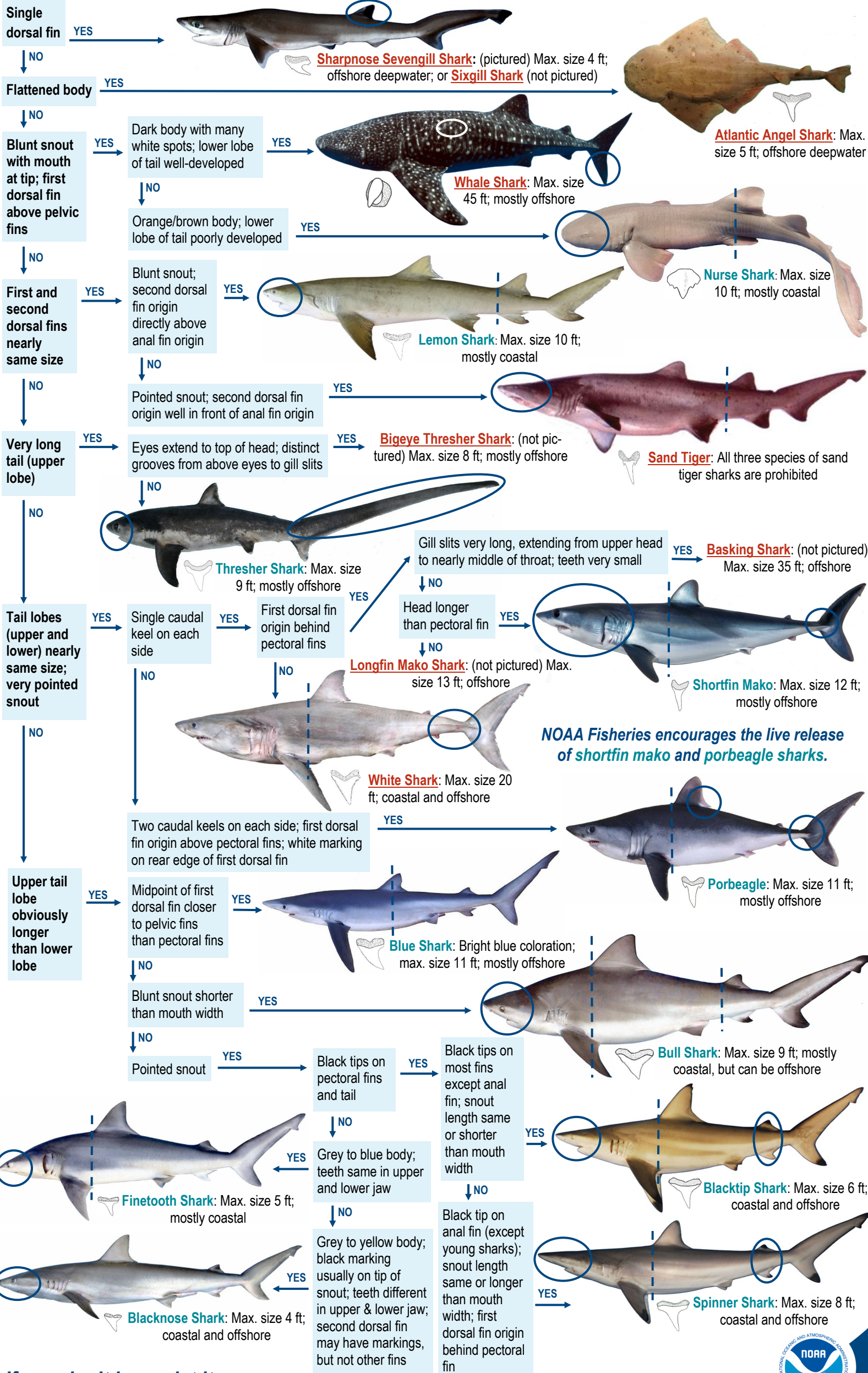
shovel-shaped head

Bonnethead: Small, black spots on body; max. size 4 ft; mostly coastal

Atlantic Sharpnose Shark: Max. size 3 ft; coastal and offshore; similar species: Smalltail sharks have very reduced labial furrows and Caribbean Sharpnose sharks lack white spots

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. Maximum sizes are approximate.

Use this key to identify non-ridgeback sharks



NOAA Fisheries encourages the live release of shortfin mako and porbeagle sharks.

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All species that may be retained in Federal waters are shown on this placard | Prohibited species are underlined in red

