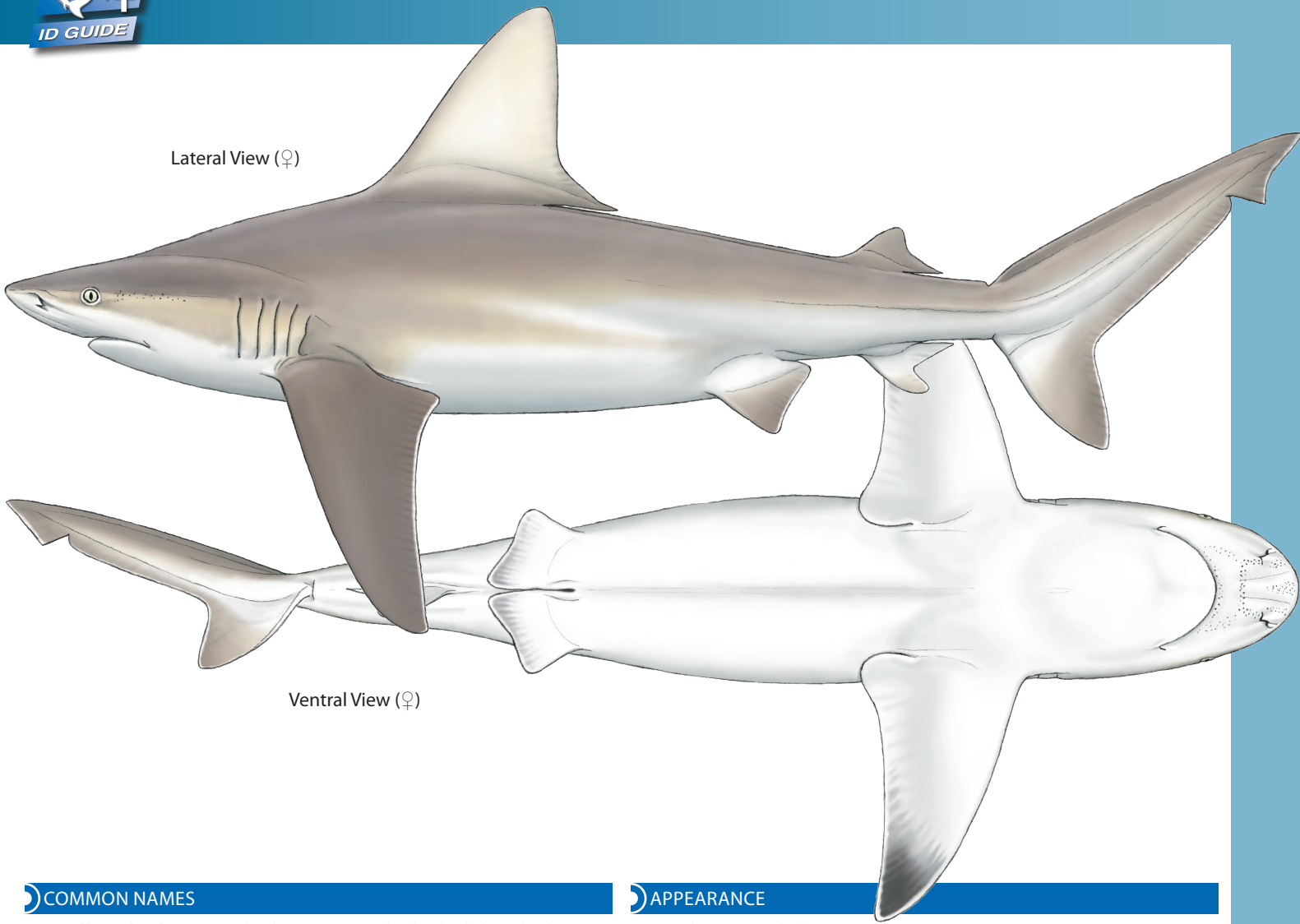


Lateral View (♀)

Ventral View (♀)



COMMON NAMES

Sandbar Shark, Brown Shark, Queriman Shark, Thickskin Shark, Requin Gris (Fr), Tiburón Trozo (Es).

SYNONYMS

Squalus plumbeus (Nardo, 1827), *Carcharias* (*Prionodon*) *milberti* (Valenciennes, in Müller & Henle), *Eulamia milberti* (Valenciennes, in Müller & Henle), *Galeolamna stevensi* (Ogilby, 1911), *Carcharhinus japonicus* (Schlegel, 1850), *Carcharhinus bleekeri* (Dumeril, 1865), *Carcharhinus platyodon* (Poey, 1861).

DISTRIBUTION



The Sandbar Shark is found almost worldwide in warm temperate and tropical waters. Its distribution in the east Atlantic is patchy from Portugal to Zaire, including the whole of the Mediterranean Sea (Compagno, 1984).

APPEARANCE

- Short, rounded snout.
- Extremely tall, triangular first dorsal fin with origin over or in front of pectoral insertions.
- Large pectoral fins.
- Moderately large second dorsal with short free rear tip.
- No conspicuous markings on fins.
- Grey blue to brown dorsally. Lighter to white ventrally.

The most distinctive feature of the Sandbar Shark is the tall first dorsal fin which originates over or in front of the pectoral insertions. The pectoral and second dorsal fins are also moderately large, although not to the same degree. There are no conspicuous markings on these fins (Compagno, 1984). It is grey-blue to brown dorsally, lighter to white ventrally (Knickle, Unknown).

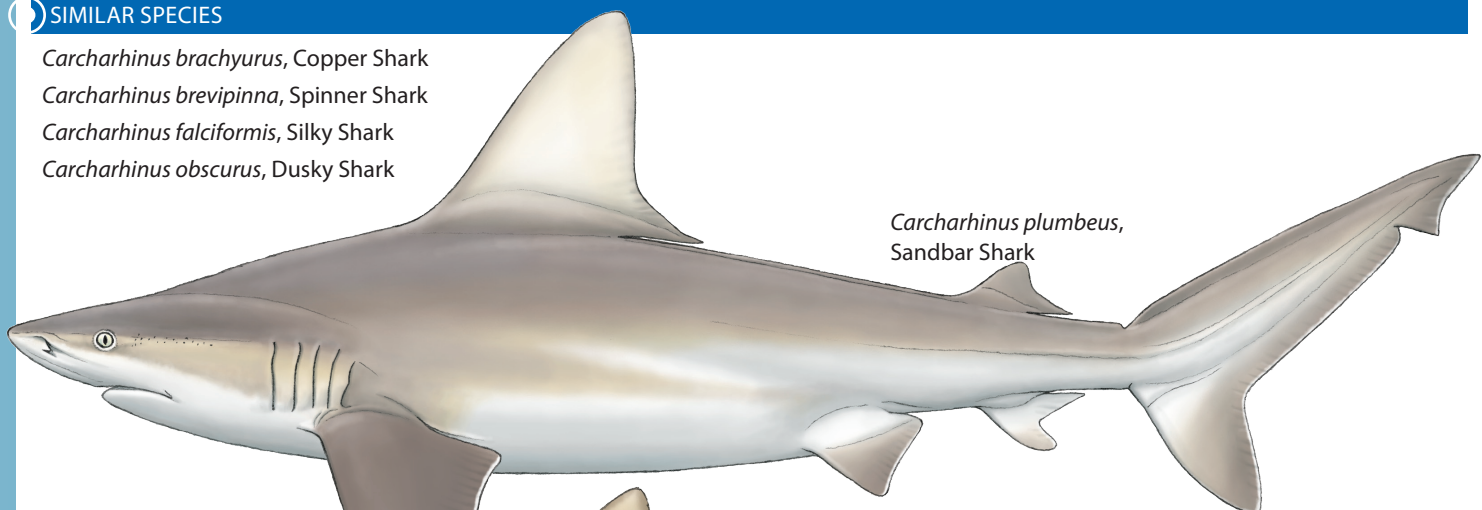
SIMILAR SPECIES

Carcharhinus brachyurus, Copper Shark

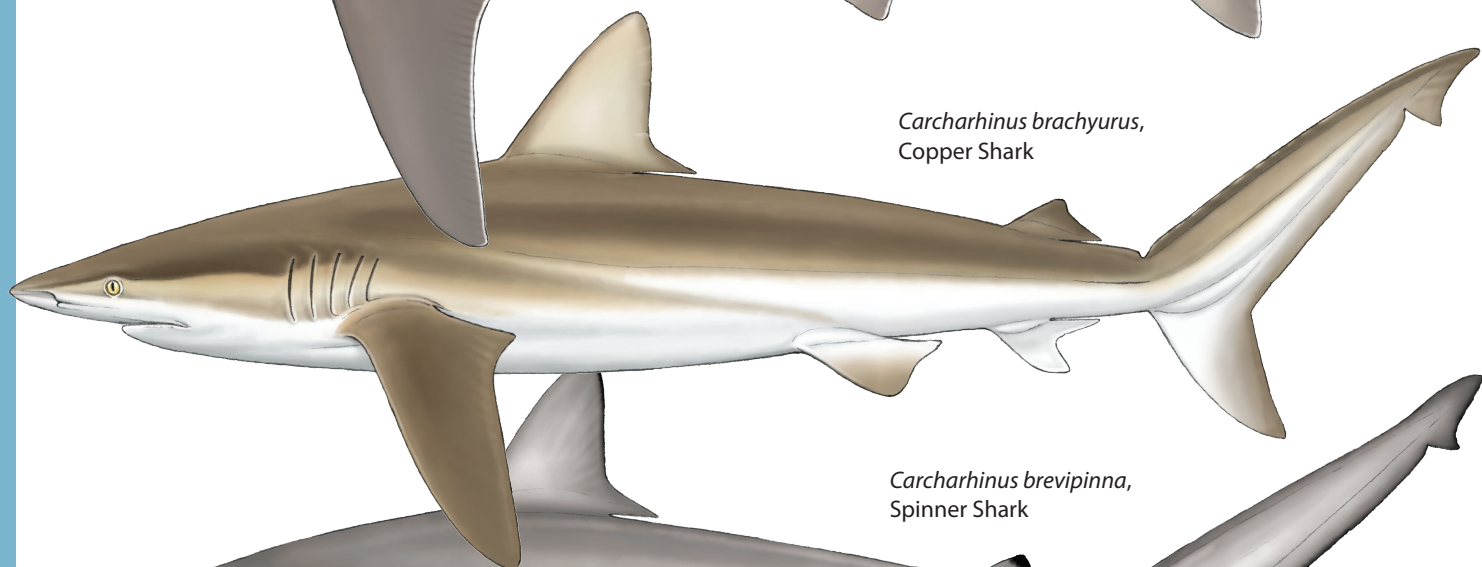
Carcharhinus brevipinna, Spinner Shark

Carcharhinus falciformis, Silky Shark

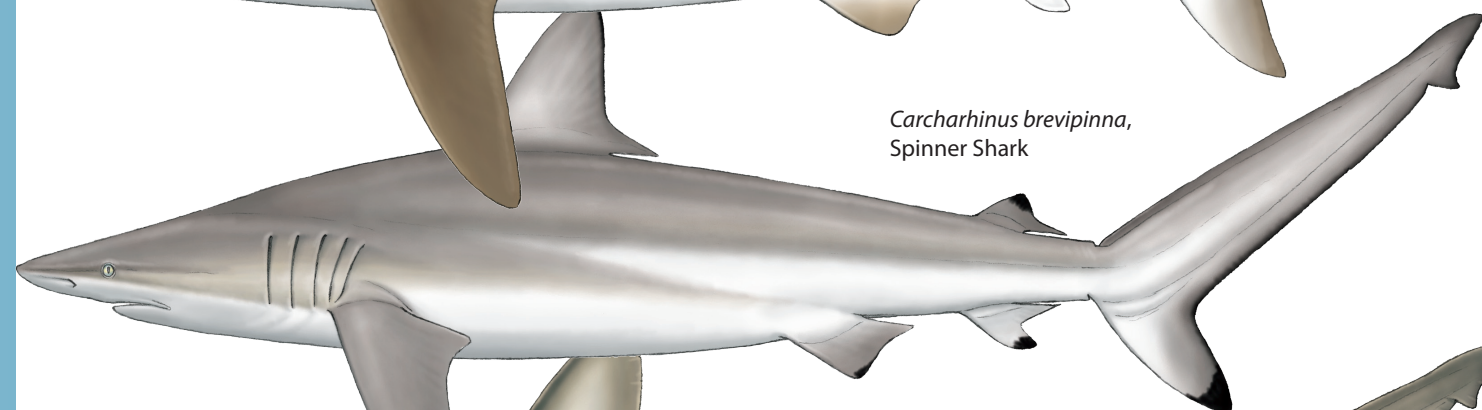
Carcharhinus obscurus, Dusky Shark



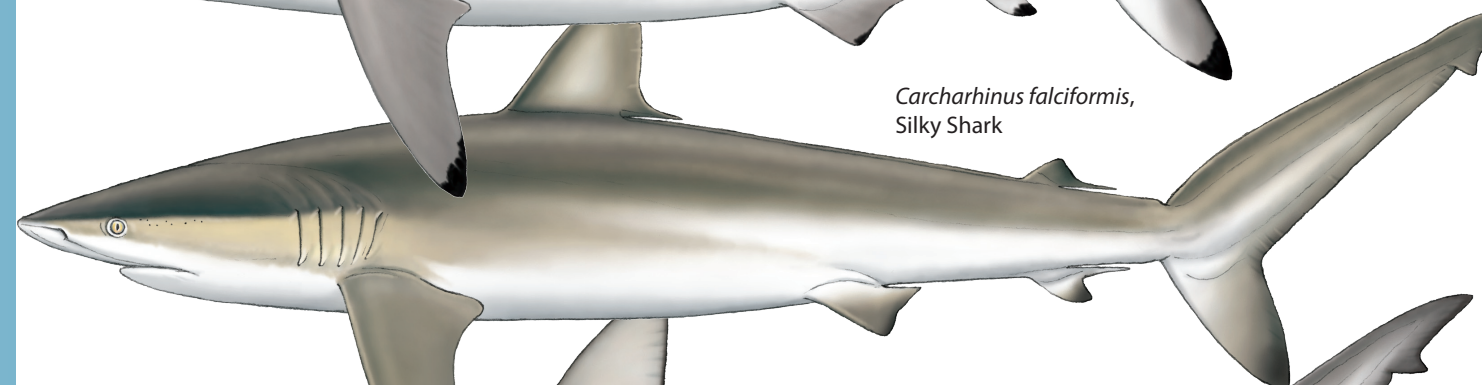
Carcharhinus plumbeus,
Sandbar Shark



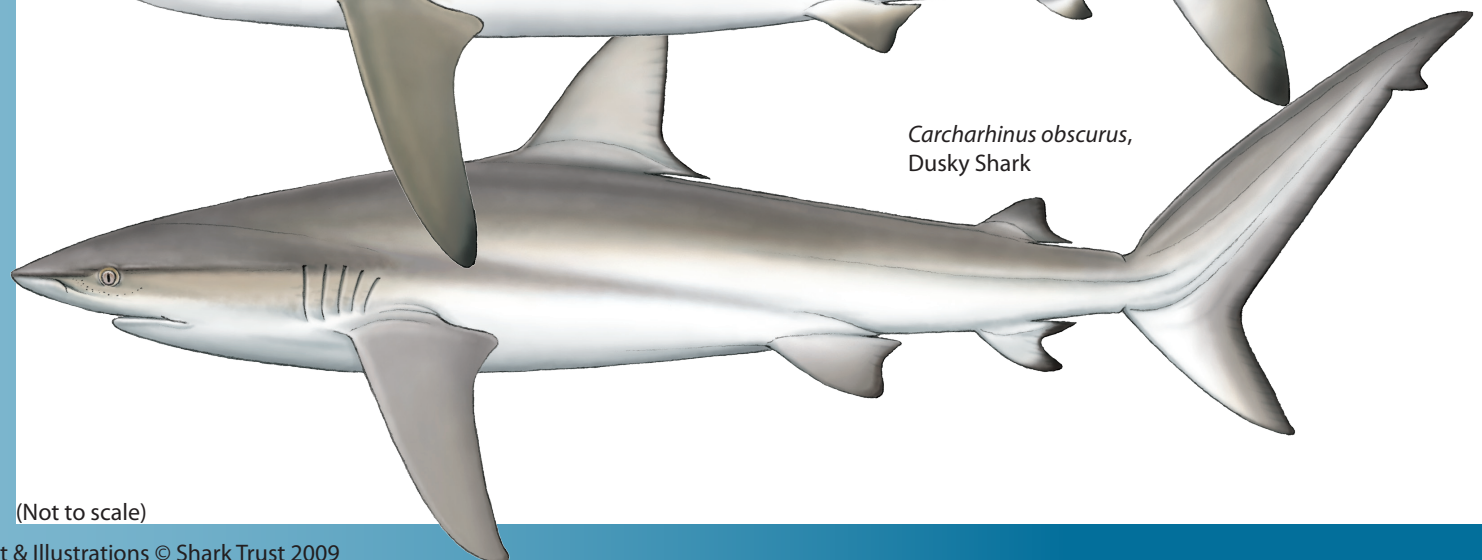
Carcharhinus brachyurus,
Copper Shark



Carcharhinus brevipinna,
Spinner Shark



Carcharhinus falciformis,
Silky Shark

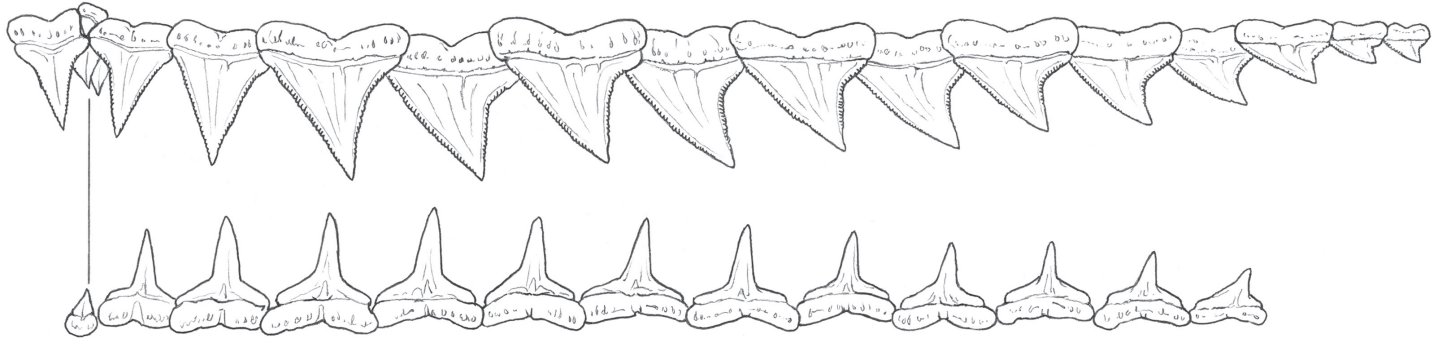


Carcharhinus obscurus,
Dusky Shark

(Not to scale)

TEETH

The upper teeth are broadly triangular, serrated and have high cusps. The lower teeth are narrower and more finely serrated (Knickle, Unknown).



ECOLOGY AND BIOLOGY

HABITAT

Predominantly a bottom dwelling, shallow water coastal species, the Sandbar Shark is seldom seen at the surface. It is most commonly found from 20–65m around continental shelves, oceanic banks and island terraces, but can be found in harbours, estuaries and at the mouths of rivers and bays. Unlike some other *Carcharhinus* species in the same habitats, it does not enter freshwater. It is believed to favour smooth substrates such as sand and mud, avoiding coral and rocky areas (Knickle, Unknown).

REPRODUCTION

Female Sandbar Sharks reach sexual maturity around 145–180cm in length, males around 130–180cm. It is a viviparous species utilising a yolk-sac placenta to nourish embryos. The gestation period is 8–12 months depending on location, with litters of 6–13 pups recorded. The size at birth is around 55–70cm. These pups are born in shallow nursery areas where they form large schools and move south and offshore during the winter months. This migration is reversed during the summer. This behaviour is reported from animals up to 5 years old (Knickle, Unknown).

DIET

The Sandbar Shark is primarily a predator on relatively small bottom fishes, with some molluscs and crustaceans taken. Its diet includes sardines, shad, menhaden, anchovies, sea catfishes, moray and snake eels, pipefish, barracuda, mullets, goatfishes, hairtails, spanish mackerel, bonito, mackerel, jacks, groupers, croakers, grunts, porgies, flounders and soles, sea robins, toadfish, cusk eels, porcupine fish, sharpnose sharks (*Rhizoprionodon* spp.), spiny dogfish (*Squalus* spp.), bonnethead sharks, guitarfish, skates, stingrays, cow-nosed rays, squid, cuttlefish, octopi, bivalves and conchs, amphipods, shrimp and crabs. It does not consume garbage and mammalian carrion as a rule, unlike some other members of its genus. Evidence from fisheries indicates that very fresh fish bait is greatly preferred to stale or even fresh-frozen fish. In addition, fish is greatly preferred to mammalian meat (Compagno, 1984).

The Sandbar Shark feeds by day and night, although more actively at night. It is thought that it is far more successful in obtaining a regular supply of food than larger *Carcharhinids* such as the Tiger Shark, *Galeocerdo cuvier*, the Bull Shark, *Carcharhinus leucas*, and the Ducky Shark, *Carcharhinus obscurus*. This is reflected in the greater number of sandbar sharks caught with full or nearly full stomachs, and liver weight, which shows much less fluctuation in sandbar sharks than in the three larger species. Data from captive individuals suggests that digestion is relatively rapid, and prey is largely digested after only two days (Compagno, 1984).

COMMERCIAL IMPORTANCE

The Sandbar Shark is a highly important commercial species, particularly off the eastern coast of the United States of America where it is the primary species taken in the commercial shark fishery. It is targeted and taken as bycatch on longlines, handlines, set bottom-nets and also by recreational anglers using rods and reels. Its flesh can be utilised fresh and preserved for human consumption, its fins for sharkfin soup, its hide for leather, its liver for oil and its carcass for fishmeal (Knickle, Unknown).

THREATS, CONSERVATION, LEGISLATION

The Sandbar Shark is a large, slow growing, late maturing species with low fecundity. It is predominantly a coastal species common and widespread in tropical and warm temperate seas worldwide, making it a target for shark fisheries across its range. It has been severely overfished in the western north and central Atlantic and, despite a management plan implemented in 2000, stocks are thought to be down to 26–43% of virgin biomass. Off western Australia, stocks have declined to around 35% of virgin biomass. It is also considered severely overfished in the Mediterranean (Gibson *et al.*, 2006).

IUCN RED LIST ASSESSMENT

Vulnerable (in prep. 2009).

HANDLING AND THORN ARRANGEMENT

- Handle with care.
- Sharp teeth.
- Abrasive skin.

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Illustrations: Marc Dando.

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