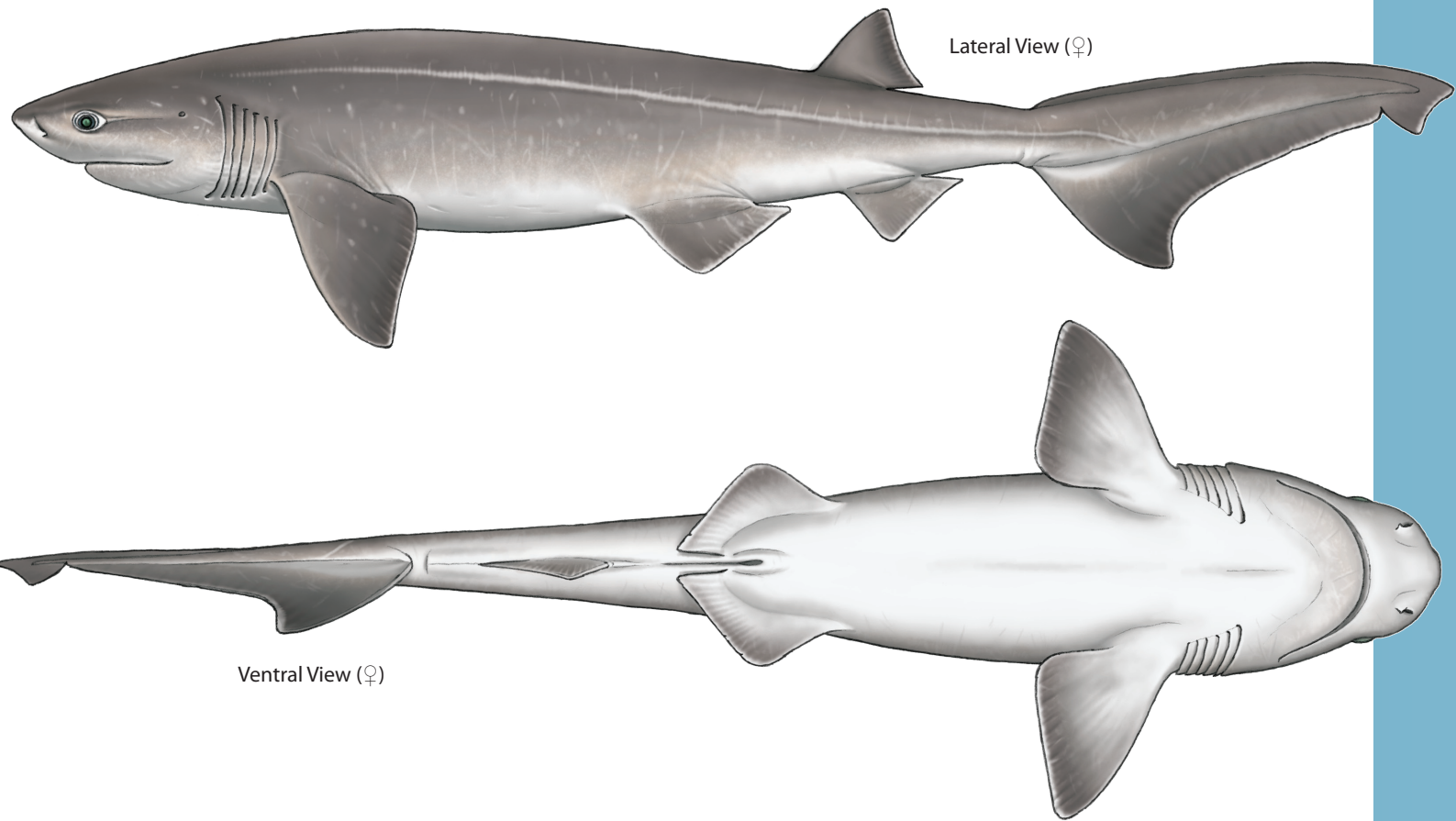




Lateral View (♀)

Ventral View (♀)

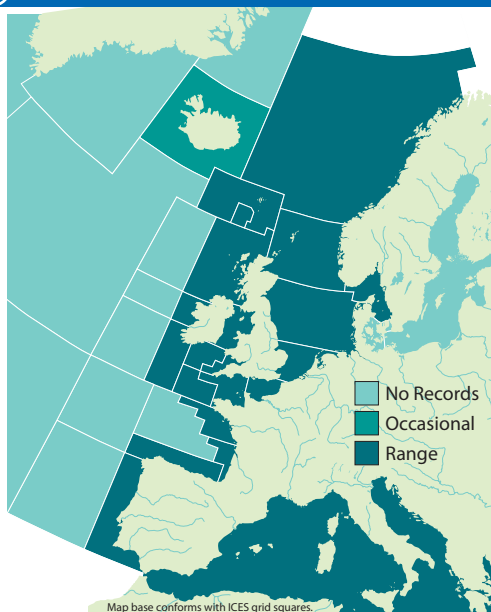
COMMON NAMES

Bluntnose Sixgill Shark, Atlantic Mud Shark, Brown Shark, Bull Dog Shark, Bull Shark, Cow Shark, Gray Shark, Mud Shark, Sixgill Cow Shark, Requin Gris (Fr), Cañabota Gris (Es).

SYNONYMS

Squalus griseus (Bonnaterre 1788), *Squalus vacca* (Bloch & Schneider 1801), *Notidanus monge* (Risso 1827), *Hexanchus corinum* (Jordan & Gilbert 1880), *Hexanchus corinus* (Jordan & Gilbert 1880), *Notidanus vulgaris* (Perez Canto 1886), *Hexanchus griseus australis* (de Buen 1960).

DISTRIBUTION



The Bluntnose Sixgill Shark is found in tropical and temperate seas worldwide. In the east Atlantic it is known from Iceland and Norway to Namibia, including the Mediterranean Sea. It is also known from the west Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans (Compagno, 1984).

APPEARANCE

- Heavy bodied, broad headed shark with six gills.
- Single dorsal fin set well back behind pelvic fins.
- Well developed dorsal lobe of caudal fin.
- Wide, broadly rounded mouth.
- Six rows of large, comb-like teeth on each side of lower jaw.
- Rows of smaller, serrated, single-cusped teeth in upper jaw.
- Large, green eyes forward of mouth.
- Grey, olive or brown on dorsal surface. Paler ventrally.
- Light coloured stripe along each flank close to lateral line.
- Fins may have pale edges.

The Bluntnose Sixgill Shark is a large, well-built shark which is quite distinctive as only two other species have six gill slits in the northeast Atlantic, the Bigeye Sixgill Shark, *Hexanchus nakamurai*, and the Frilled Shark, *Chlamydoselachus anguineus*. It could be confused with the Bigeye Sixgill Shark but is much larger and more heavily built with a shorter, blunter snout and smaller eyes.

A single, small dorsal fin is present and set well back along the body, behind the pelvic fins. The pectoral fins have large bases and well rounded tips. The pelvic fins and anal fins are both well developed, comparable to the dorsal fin in size. The dorsal lobe of the caudal fin is large with a well developed terminal lobe and sub terminal notch. The ventral lobe is not particularly pronounced (Bester, Unknown).

SIMILAR SPECIES

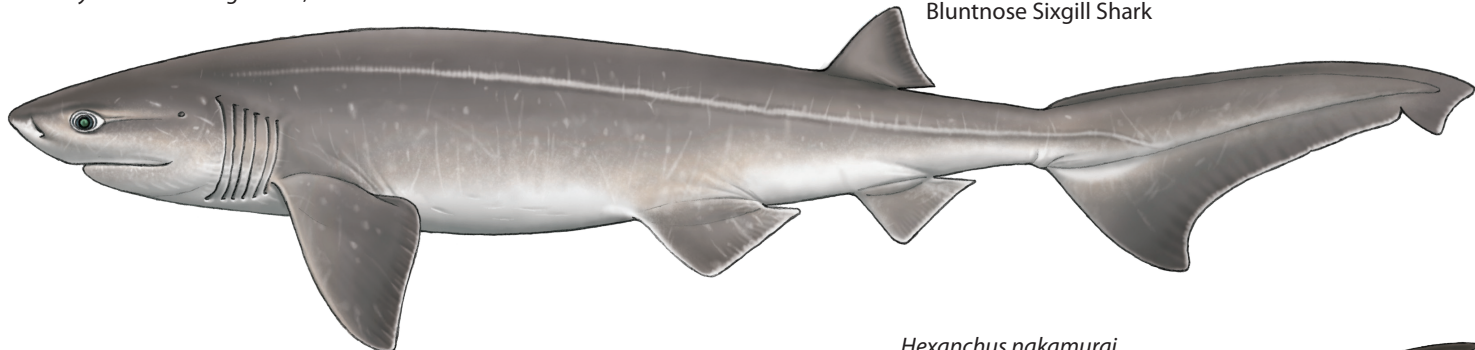
Hexanchus nakamurai, Bigeye Sixgill Shark

Heptranchias perlo, Sharpnose Sevengill Shark

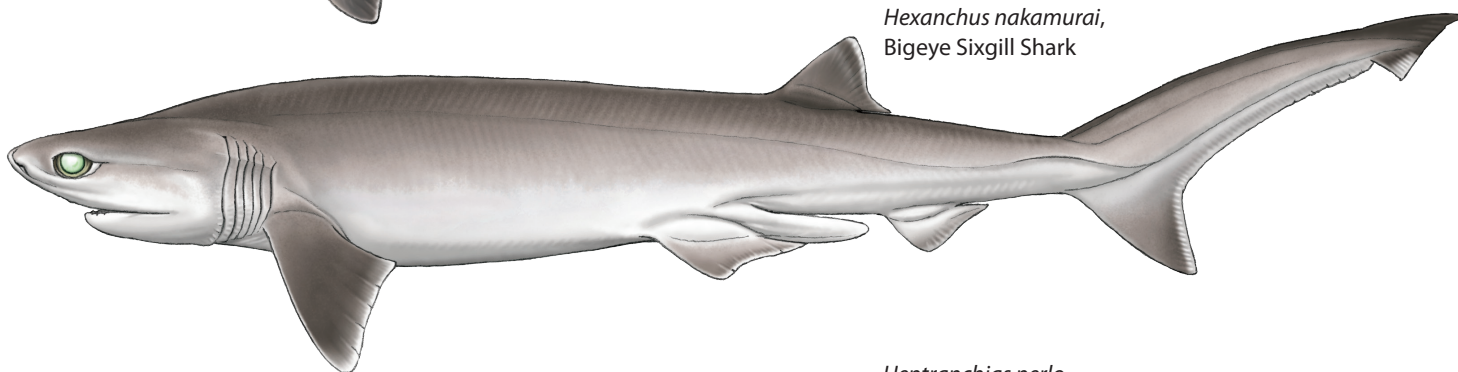
Somniosus microcephalus, Greenland Shark

Chlamydoselachus anguineus, Frilled Shark

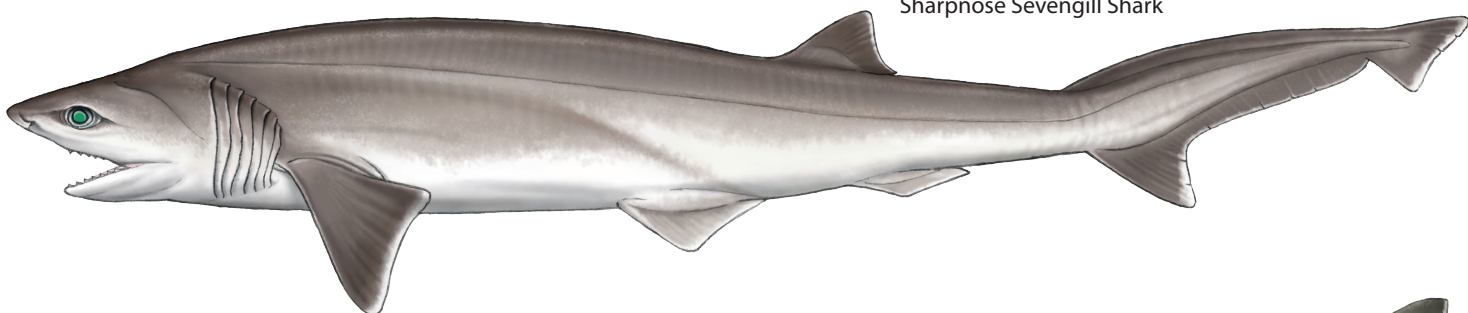
Hexanchus griseus,
Bluntnose Sixgill Shark



Hexanchus nakamurai,
Bigeye Sixgill Shark



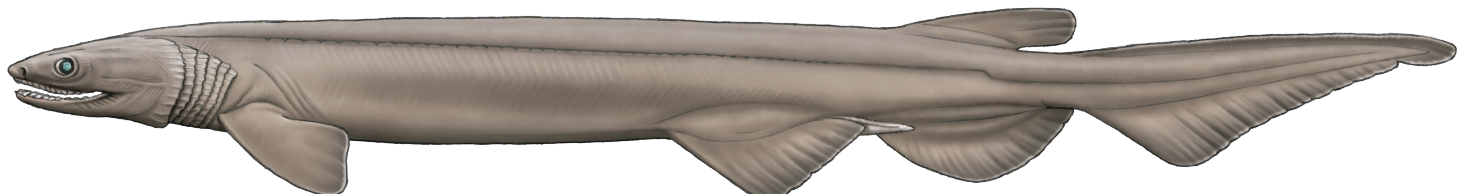
Heptranchias perlo,
Sharpnose Sevengill Shark



Somniosus microcephalus,
Greenland Shark



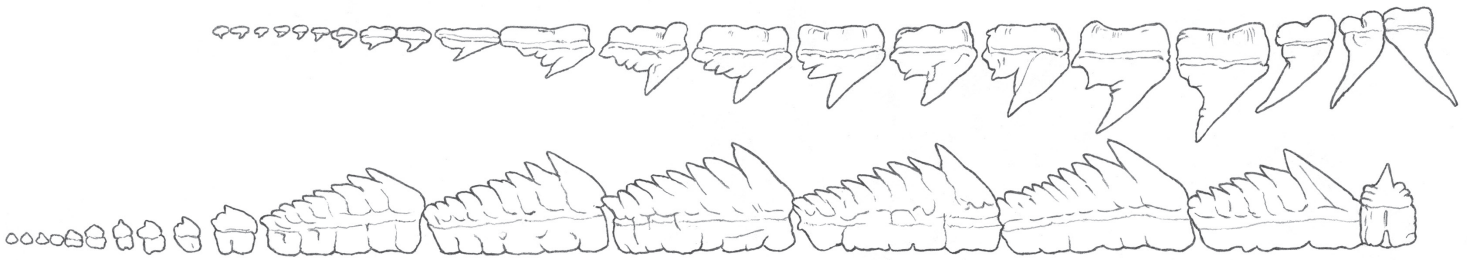
Chlamydoselachus anguineus,
Frilled Shark



(Not to scale)

TEETH

There are six rows of comb-like teeth either side of the symphysial tooth in the lower jaw (Compagno, 1984). In the upper jaw there are nine smaller, serrated, single cusped teeth on either side (Bester, Unknown).



ECOLOGY AND BIOLOGY

HABITAT

A deepwater shark, it is found to depths of 2,000 metres where it rests during the day. During the night it comes up to shallower waters to feed. Juveniles have been reported from close to the shore. Very little is known of the behaviour of the Bluntnose Sixgill Shark, although it appears to be a solitary animal (Bester, Unknown).

EGGCASE

N/A

DIET

The Bluntnose Sixgill Shark feeds nocturnally on a wide variety of prey including large bony fish such as dolphinfish, billfish, flounder, cod, hagfish and lampreys. It also preys on other elasmobranchs such as Spurdog (*Squalus acanthias*), Longnose Spurdog (*Squalus blainvillei*), Shortnose Spurdog (*Squalus megalops*), Prickly Sharks (*Echinorhinus cookei*), rays and chimaeras. It is also known to feed on snails, crabs, shrimps, squid and carrion such as seals, sea lions and whales (Compagno, 1984). Studies from eastern Sicilian waters showed that the most important prey items were teleost fish (60.87%), followed by cephalopods (13.04%), decapod crustaceans (8.7%), chondrichthyans (4.35%) and echinoderms (4.35%) (Kabasakal, 2004).

REPRODUCTION

Males mature at a total length of around 300cm, females at a total length of around 400cm. Best estimates put the age at maturity for males around 11–14 years, for females 18–35 years. An ovoviparous species, the gestation period is unknown but is likely to be long. Litters can be extremely large with 22 to 108 pups. Each pup measures 60–75cm in length (Bester, Unknown).

COMMERCIAL IMPORTANCE

The Bluntnose Sixgill Shark is fished both commercially and recreationally across its range using line gear, trawls, gillnets and traps. Its flesh is used for human consumption fresh, frozen and dried-salted. Its liver is used for oil and it is processed into fishmeal (Bester, Unknown).

Recently, reliable appearances of the species in shallow water off British Columbia and Washington State have started to attract interest from recreational divers. The British Columbia Dive Operators' Association has estimated that visiting divers inject \$5 -10,000,000 a year into the local economy (Martin, 1998).

THREATS, CONSERVATION, LEGISLATION

The Bluntnose Sixgill Shark seems particularly vulnerable to overfishing and is unable to sustain healthy population levels when targeting fishing occurs. It is regularly taken as bycatch in fisheries targeting other deepwater sharks such as *Centrophorus* spp. Due to a lack of fisheries data across the majority of its range it is very difficult to quantify population declines in this species. There are no management plans in place for the conservation of the Bluntnose Sixgill Shark (Shark Specialist Group, 2000).

IUCN RED LIST ASSESSMENT

Near Threatened (2000).

HANDLING AND THORN ARRANGEMENT

- Handle with care.
- Powerful jaws and sharp teeth.
- Abrasive skin.

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Illustrations: Marc Dando.

Citation

Shark Trust; 2010. An Illustrated Compendium of Sharks, Skates, Rays and Chimaera. Chapter 1: The British Isles and Northeast Atlantic. Part 2: Sharks.

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