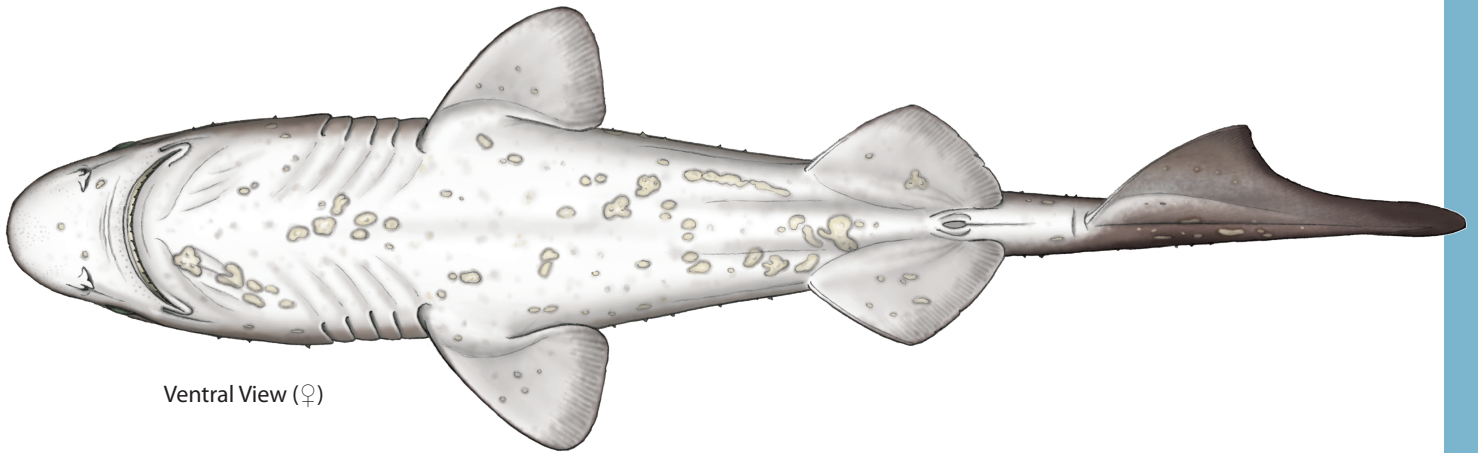


Lateral View (♀)



Ventral View (♀)



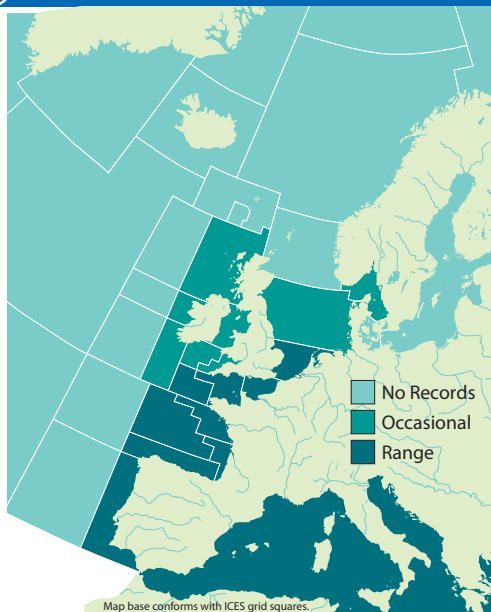
COMMON NAMES

Bramble Shark, Spiny Shark, Spinous Shark, Squale Bouclé (Fr), Tiburón de Clavos (Es).

SYNONYMS

Squalus brucus (Bonnaterre 1788), *Squalus spinosus* (Gmelin 1789), *Echinorhinus obesus* (Smith 1849), *Echinorhinus mccoysi* (Whitley 1931).

DISTRIBUTION



In the east Atlantic the Bramble Shark can be encountered from the North Sea to the Ivory Coast, including the western Mediterranean. Further south it is known from Namibia to the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa. It is also found in the west Atlantic, the South Atlantic, the Pacific and the Indian Ocean (Bester and Burgess, Unknown).

APPEARANCE

- Stout, soft and flabby body.
- Large, thorn-like denticles scattered across body.
- Dorsal fins close-set and far back with no associated spines.
- No anal fin.
- No sub-terminal notch on caudal fin.
- 310cm maximum total length.

The Bramble Shark is an extremely distinctive shark in the northeast Atlantic as it is covered in 'buckler' thorns. These have rounded bases and are often fused together to form large plates (15-25mm across) with multiple cusps (Bester and Burgess, Unknown). In addition, when freshly caught they are often covered in bad smelling mucus (Martin, Unknown). The snout is snort and blunt and the gill slits are large, especially the fifth. The dorsal fins are set extremely far back (both on the pre-caudal tail, first almost level with the pelvic fins) and are extremely close-set. There is no anal fin (Bester and Burgess, Unknown).

The Bramble Shark can be dark grey, olive, purple, black or brown with metallic reflections on the back and flanks. Occasionally it has darker blotches. Ventrally, it is pale brown to white. It reaches a maximum total length of 310cm (Bester and Burgess, Unknown).

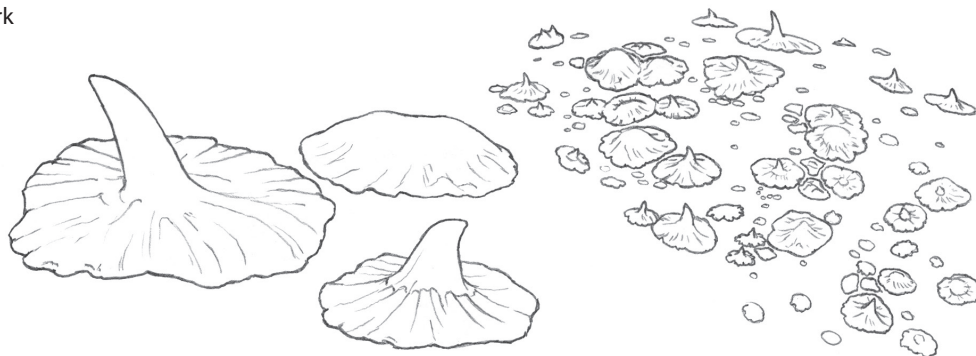
SIMILAR SPECIES

Somniosus microcephalus, Greenland Shark

Somniosus rostratus, Little Sleeper Shark

Hexanchus griseus, Bluntnose Sixgill Shark

Dermal Denticles of *Echinorhinus brucus*



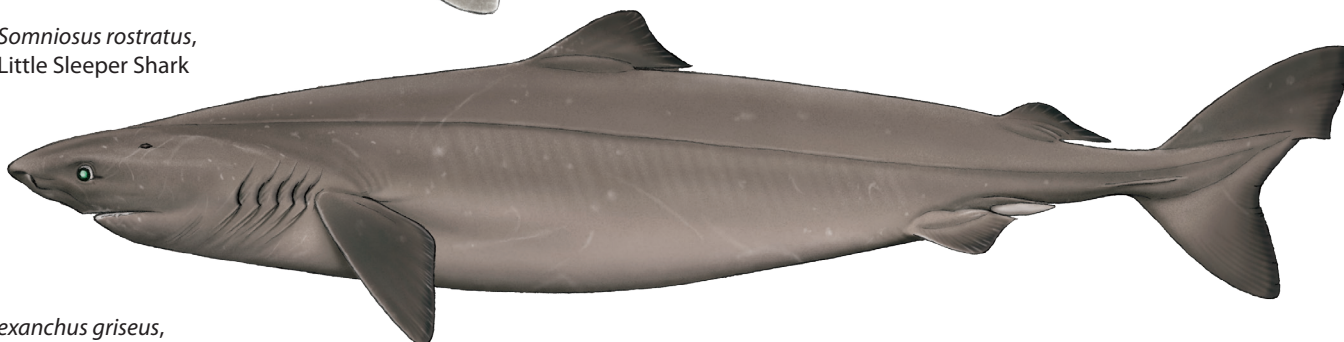
Echinorhinus brucus,
Bramble Shark



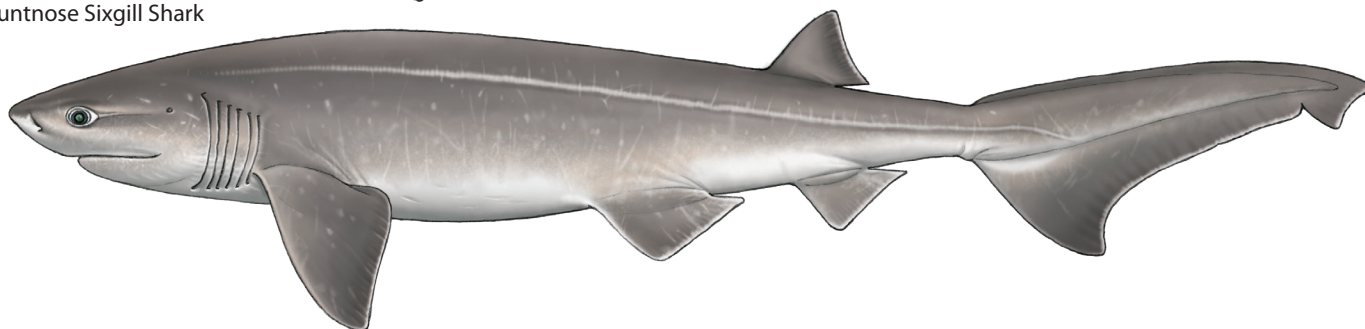
Somniosus microcephalus,
Greenland Shark



Somniosus rostratus,
Little Sleeper Shark



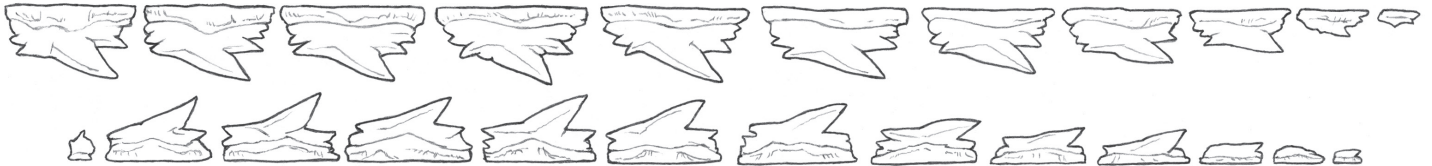
Hexanchus griseus,
Bluntnose Sixgill Shark



(Not to scale)

TEETH

The teeth are similar in both jaws. There is a single cusp and up to 3 cusplets on each tooth. These cusplets are absent in juveniles. There are 20–26 in the upper jaw, 22–26 in the lower jaw (Compagno, 1984).



ECOLOGY AND BIOLOGY

HABITAT

The Bramble Shark is a deepwater, bottom-dwelling shark which is considered to be rather sluggish. It has been recorded from 18–900 metres but is most common below 200m (Bester and Burgess, Unknown).

EGGCASE

N/A

DIET

The diet of the Bramble Shark is poorly understood but is thought to consist of bony fish (Ling, Catfish and Lizardfish) and crustaceans, as well as smaller sharks (Spiny Dogfish, *Squalus acanthias*) (Compagno, 1984).

REPRODUCTION

Males are thought to mature at approximately 160cm in length, females at approximately 200cm in length (Paul, 2003). An ovoviparous species, females can have 15–24 pups per litter. Each of these is born measuring 40–50cm in length (Bester and Burgess, Unknown).

COMMERCIAL IMPORTANCE

A relatively unimportant species. the Bramble Shark is caught in bottom trawls and on hand lines from the North Sea to Portugal and can be utilised for fish meal. The liver oil has traditional medicinal uses in South Africa (Compagno, 1984).

THREATS, CONSERVATION, LEGISLATION

The Bramble Shark is an apparently rare deepwater shark that is recorded sporadically and usually singularly. It is speculated to occur at greater depths than are currently fished but this is yet to be proved. While little is known of its life history, it is likely to be slow growing, late maturing and have a low overall productivity. This low recruitment potential makes deep-sea sharks such as the Bramble Shark particularly vulnerable to fishing pressure and declines in the species have been recorded in the northeast Atlantic since the mid 1990's (Paul, 2003). There are currently no conservation actions or management plans in place for the Bramble Shark.

IUCN RED LIST ASSESSMENT

Data Deficient (2003).

HANDLING AND THORN ARRANGEMENT

- Handle with care.
- Large, thorn-like denticles scattered over body.
- Sharp teeth.

REFERENCES

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Text: Richard Hurst.
Illustrations: Marc Dando.

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