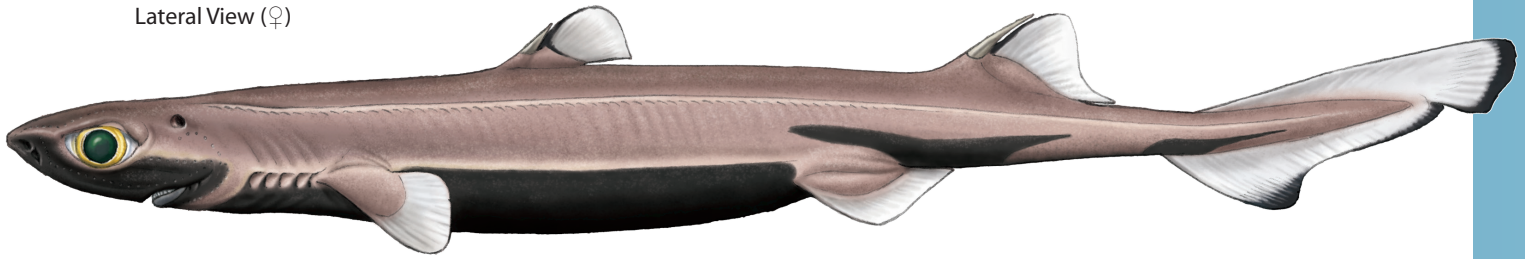
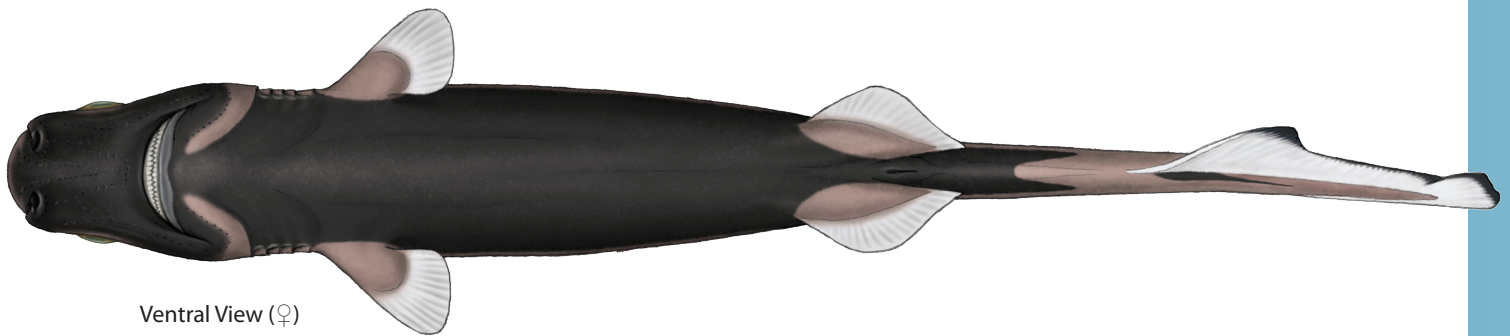


Lateral View (♀)



Ventral View (♀)



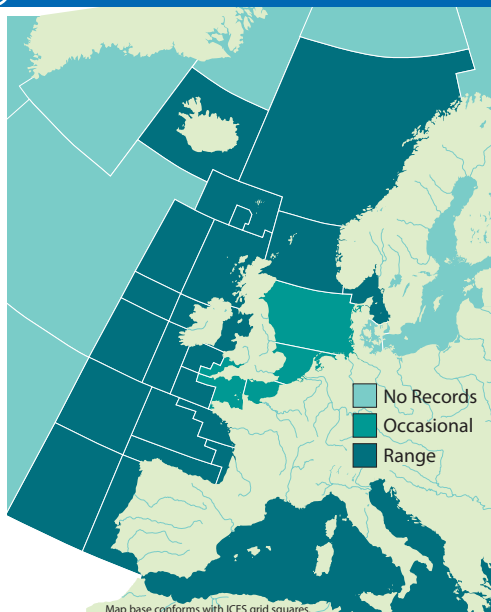
COMMON NAMES

Velvet Belly Lanternshark, Black Centrina, Sagre Commun (Fr), Negrito (Es).

SYNONYMS

Etmopterus spinax (Linnaeus, 1758), *Squalus spinax* (Linnaeus, 1758), *Squalus niger* (Gunnerus, 1762), *Etmopterus aculeatus* (Rafinesque, 1810), *Squalus infernus* (Blainville, 1825), *Spinax gunneri* (Reinhardt, 1825), *Spinax vitalinus* (de la Pylaie, 1835), *Spinax linnei* (Malm, 1877).

DISTRIBUTION



The Velvet Belly Lanternshark is found in the east Atlantic from Iceland and Norway to Gabon, including the western Mediterranean. It is also known from the Azores, the Cape Verde Islands and South Africa (Compagno, 1984).

APPEARANCE

- Small first dorsal fin set well behind pectoral fins.
- Larger second dorsal fin behind pelvic fins.
- Well developed spines with each dorsal fin.
- No anal fin.
- Long dorsal lobe of caudal fin.
- Very small ventral lobe of caudal fin.
- Lower teeth slender and blade-like.
- Upper teeth with cusps and cusplets.
- Dorsal surface brown.
- Ventral surface black with prominent black markings on sides of tail.
- Light emitting photophores on ventral surface.
- Maximum total length 60cm, rare above 45cm.

The Velvet Belly Lanternshark is a stout bodied lanternshark with a fairly long tail and prominent markings which is unlikely to be misidentified in the North Atlantic. Like other lanternsharks its first dorsal fin is small and set back along the body, well behind the pectoral fins. The second dorsal fin is larger and behind the pelvic fins. Both have a large spine. There is no anal fin. The dorsal lobe of the caudal fin is very long while the ventral lobe is very small (Compagno, 1984).

Colouration on the dorsal surface is plain brown. Usually, the ventral surface is darker to black. There are prominent black markings behind the pelvic fins and along the tail. There are light emitting photophores on the ventral surface (Shark Foundation, 2005). The maximum total length is 60cm and it is rare above 45cm (Compagno, 1984).

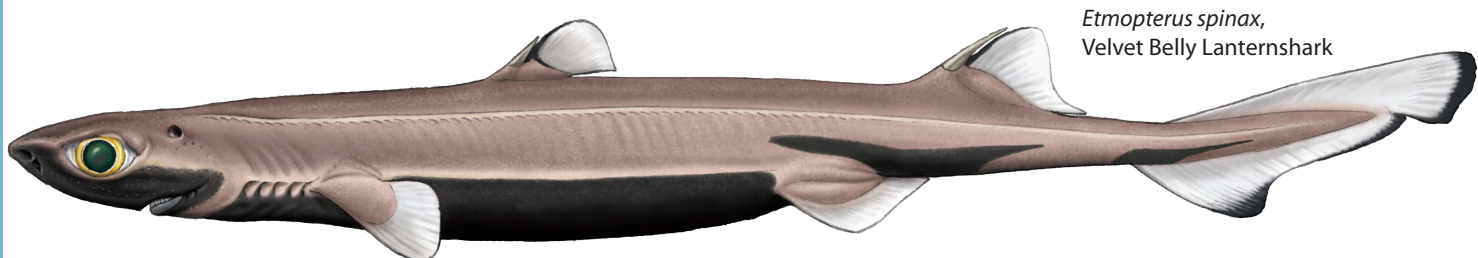
SIMILAR SPECIES

Etmopterus pusillus, Smooth Lanternshark

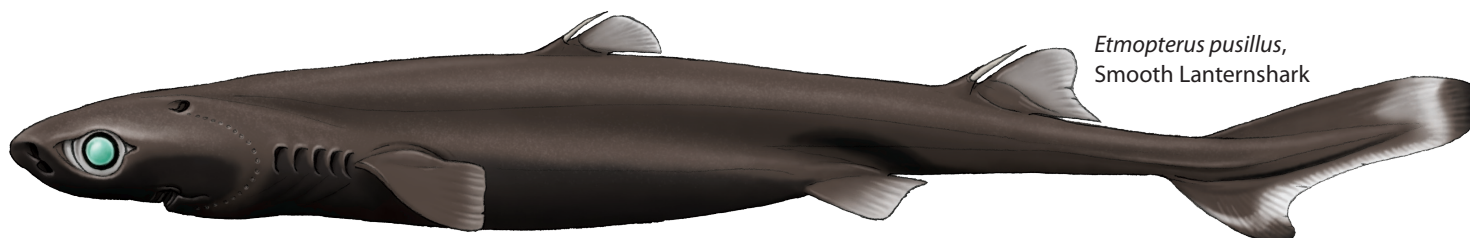
Etmopterus princeps, Greater Lanternshark

Centroscyllium fabricii, Black Dogfish

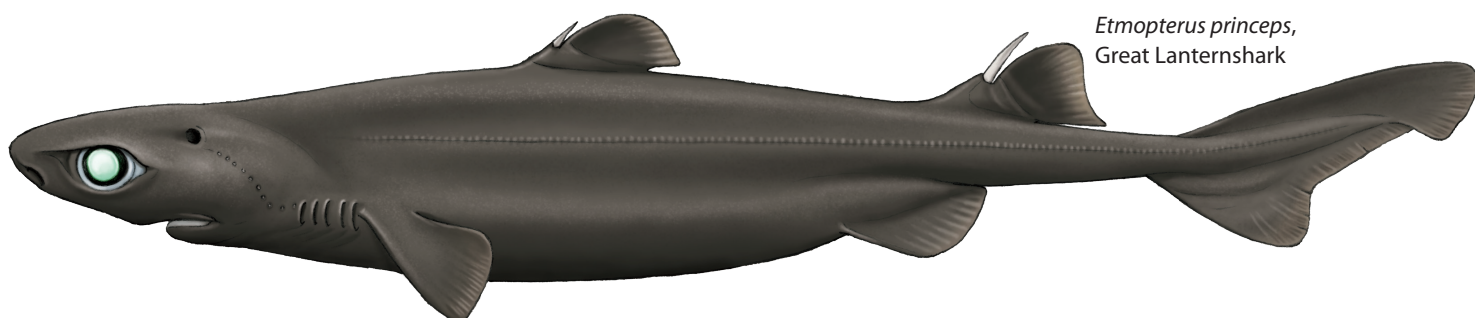
Centroscyrnus coelolepis, Portuguese Dogfish



Etmopterus spinax,
Velvet Belly Lanternshark



Etmopterus pusillus,
Smooth Lanternshark



Etmopterus princeps,
Great Lanternshark



Centroscyllium fabricii,
Black Dogfish



Centroscyrnus coelolepis,
Portuguese Dogfish

(Not to scale)

TEETH

The lower teeth are blade-like and unicuspidate. The upper teeth have cusps with three or fewer cusplets (Compagno, 1984).

ECOLOGY AND BIOLOGY

HABITAT

The Velvet Belly Lanternshark is found on, near or well above the substrate from 70-2,000 metres, though mostly between 200 and 500m (Compagno, 1984). It is known to segregate by size into different depths with large, mature females found at the greatest depths (Gibson *et al.*, 2006).

EGGCASE

N/A

DIET

The diet of the Velvet Belly Lanternshark is poorly understood but is thought to include small fishes, molluscs and crustaceans (Shark Foundation, 2005).

REPRODUCTION

Both males and females reach sexual maturity at 33-35cm in length. It is an ovoviparous species. Litters of 6 to 20 pups have been recorded, each of which is born between 12 and 14cm in length (Shark Foundation, 2005).

COMMERCIAL IMPORTANCE

The Velvet Belly Lanternshark is taken as bycatch in the eastern Atlantic in bottom and pelagic trawl fisheries. It is sometimes utilised for fishmeal and dried/salted for human consumption. It is probably unimportant but catch statistics are lacking (Compagno, 1984).

THREATS, CONSERVATION, LEGISLATION

A non-commercial species, the Velvet Belly Lanternshark is taken as bycatch and is often discarded, severely limiting the landings data available. Scientific trawls from the Mediterranean, eastern central Atlantic and south Atlantic indicate that the population has not declined in these areas. Scientific trawls from the northeast Atlantic have shown population declines of up to 20% between the 1970's and 2004. Due to increasing deepwater fisheries effort and the typical deep-sea shark life history characteristics this species displays, it is likely that populations will continue to decline, at least at their current rate if not more rapidly (Gibson *et al.*, 2006).

In ICES sub-areas V, VI, VII, VIII and IX a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 1,646 tons (2008) applies to the deepwater sharks *Centroscymnus coelolepis*, *Centrophorus granulosus*, *C. squamosus*, *Deania calceus*, *Dalatias licha*, *Etmopterus princeps*, *E. spinax*, *Centroscyllium fabricii*, *Galeus melastomus*, *G. murinus* and all *Apristurus* spp. Additionally, these species have a TAC of 20 tons in sub-area X and a TAC of 49 tons (including *Deania histricosa* and *D. profundorum*) in sub-area XII (CPOA Shark, 2009).

IUCN RED LIST ASSESSMENT

Least Concern (2008).

Near Threatened in northeast Atlantic.

HANDLING AND THORN ARRANGEMENT

- Handle with care.
- Well developed dorsal spines.
- Sharp teeth.
- Abrasive skin.

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Illustrations: Marc Dando.

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