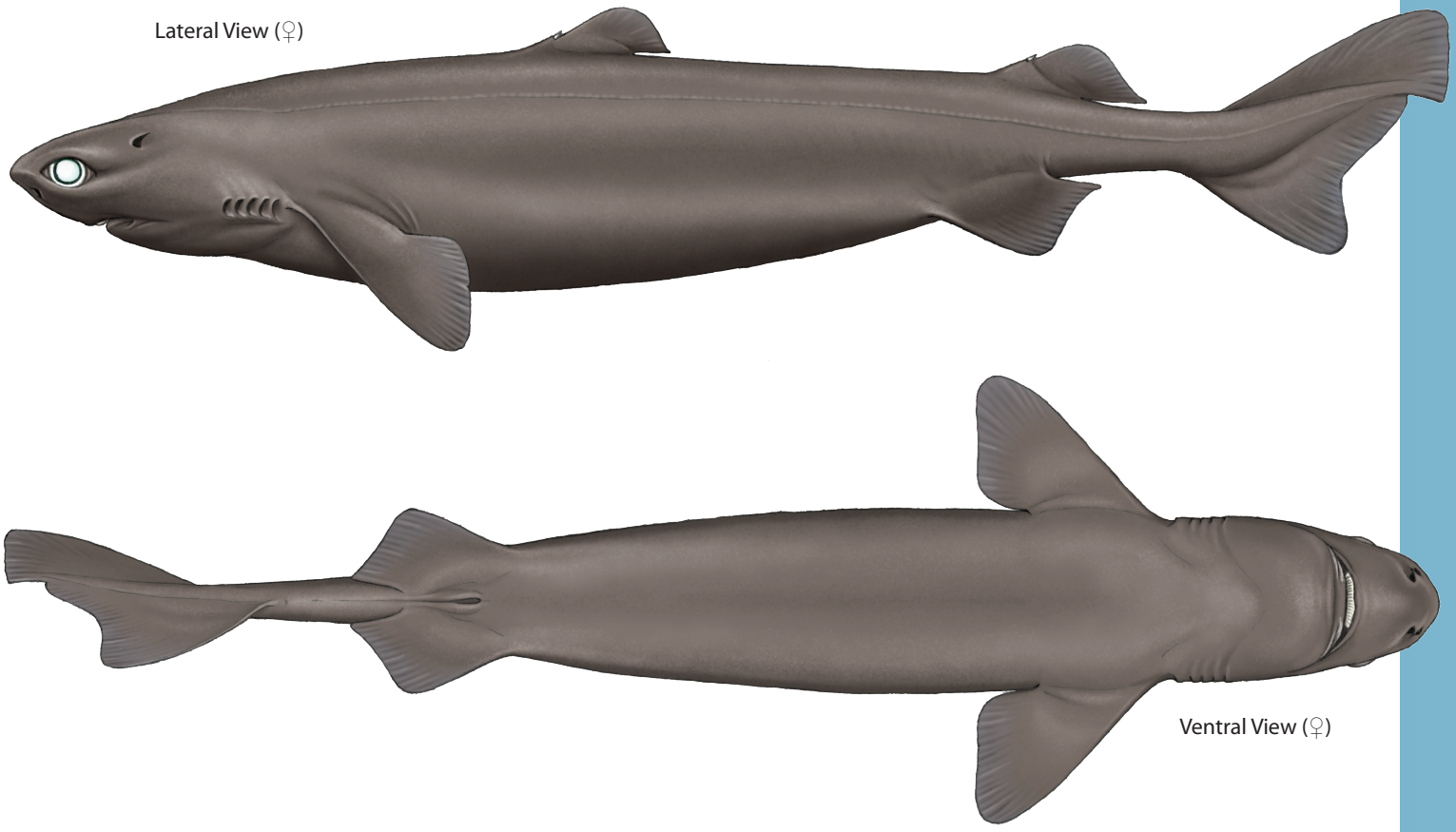
Portuguese Dogfish

Centroscymnus coelolepis



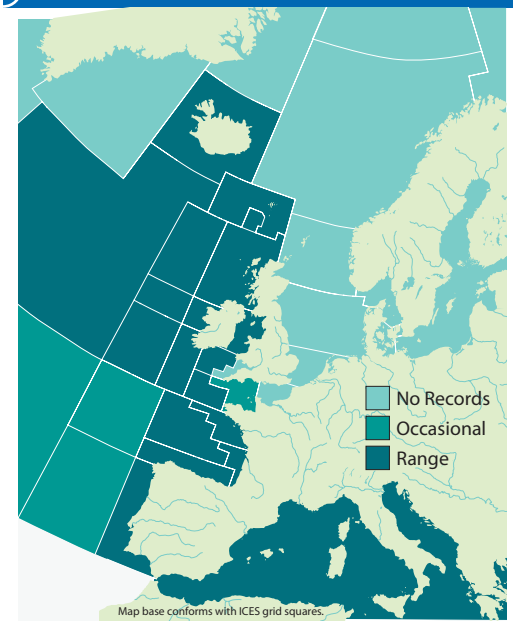
COMMON NAMES

Portuguese Dogfish, Portuguese Shark, Siki Shark, Pailona Commun (Fr), Pailona (Es).

SYNONYMS

Centrophorus coelolepis (Saemundsson, 1922), *Scymnodon melas* (Bigelow, Schroeder & Springer, 1953).

DISTRIBUTION



The Portuguese Dogfish is found throughout the North Atlantic from Newfoundland to Virginia in the west and from Iceland to Sierra Leone in the east. Also found in the western Mediterranean, the South Atlantic and the western Pacific (Burgess and Bester, Unknown).

APPEARANCE

- First dorsal fin is smaller than the second, both have inconspicuous spines.
- First dorsal originates behind the pectoral fins, second above the pelvic fins.
- Dorsal fins are relatively small.
- No anal fin.
- Dorsal caudal lobe much longer than the ventral with a strong subterminal notch.
- Adults uniform black or brown.
- Very young individuals bluish black, juveniles darker to black.
- Maximum total length 120cm females, 90cm males.

A stout bodied shark with a short snout and slightly arched mouth. The dorsal fins are tiny with inconspicuous spines. The first dorsal fin is set well behind the pectoral fins, the second above or slightly behind the pelvic fins. There is no anal fin. The dorsal lobe of the caudal fin is much longer than the ventral lobe and has a deep subterminal notch (Compagno, 1984).

Adults are a uniform black or brown on all surfaces. Juveniles are usually darker to black. Very young individuals can be a lighter bluish black. The maximum recorded sizes are 120cm total length for females and 90cm total length for males, although the average length for both sexes is 70–100cm (Burgess and Bester, Unknown).

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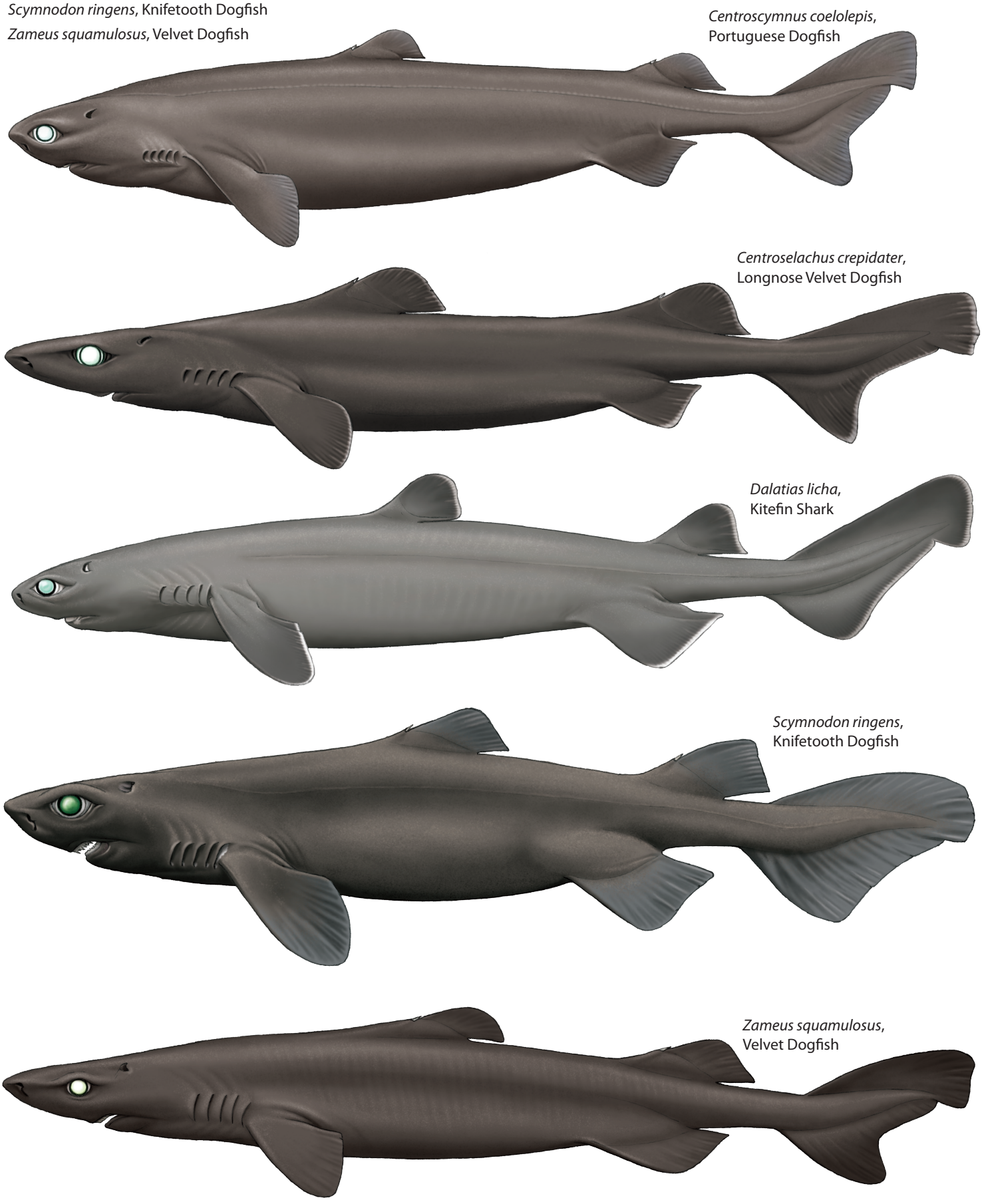
Portuguese Dogfish

SIMILAR SPECIES

Centroselachus crepidater, Longnose Velvet Dogfish
Dalatias licha, Kitefin Shark
Scymnodon ringens, Knifetooth Dogfish
Zameus squamulosus, Velvet Dogfish



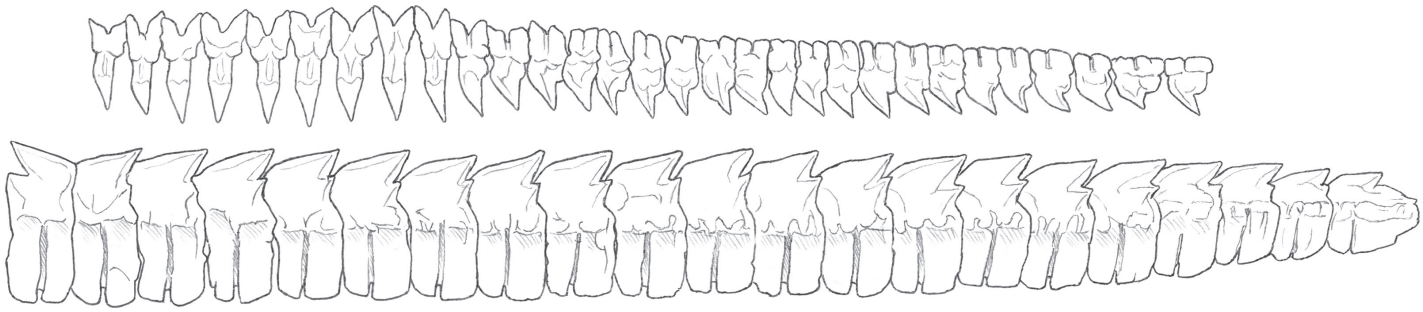
(Not to scale)

Portuguese Dogfish

Centroscymnus coelolepis

TEETH

The upper and lower teeth are markedly different. The uppers are erect and thin with one lanceolate cusp and no cusplets. The lowers are large and short with oblique cusps and overlapping bases. This forms a cutting edge that can saw through prey while the awl-shaped upper teeth hold it. There are 43–68 teeth in the upper jaw, 29–41 in the lower jaw (Burgess and Bester, Unknown).



ECOLOGY AND BIOLOGY

HABITAT

The Portuguese Dogfish can be found on or near the bottom from 270–3,700m, although catches are highest deeper than 1,000m. Surveys from the Portuguese continental shelf have failed to catch the Portuguese Dogfish in water shallower than 800m. It appears to segregate by size and sex with smaller specimens at greater depths and pregnant females found shallowest (Stevens and Correia, 2003).

EGGCASE

N/A

DIET

The Portuguese Dogfish feeds primarily on bony fish (*Hoplostethus atlanticus*, alepocephalids and myctophids), other elasmobranchs and cephalopods. It has also been known to feed on gastropods and cetacean meat (either scavenged or possibly taken from live animals in the manner of cookiecutter sharks, *Isistius* spp.) (Stevens and Correia, 2003).

REPRODUCTION

In Australian waters, male Portuguese Dogfish reach sexual maturity at around 75cm total length, females a little larger at 95cm. In Japanese and European waters, maturity has been reported as between 70–86cm for males and 100cm for females. There does not appear to be a fixed breeding period, although gestation periods are unknown. Litters of 8–19 individuals have been recorded and pups are born at around 30cm total length (Stevens and Correia, 2003).

Supported by:

Portuguese Dogfish

COMMERCIAL IMPORTANCE

The Portuguese Dogfish is mainly a bycatch species taken by trawl and longline fisheries. However, there is some targeting for its liver and flesh and it is utilized in the east Atlantic for fishmeal and human consumption (Stevens and Correia, 2003; Compagno, 1984).

IUCN RED LIST ASSESSMENT

Near Threatened (2003).

Endangered in northeast Atlantic.

THREATS, CONSERVATION, LEGISLATION

The Portuguese Dogfish is mainly taken as a bycatch species in deepwater trawl and line fisheries although there is some targeting for its flesh and oil. Quantitative data on populations is lacking but its low abundance, demersal habitat and low productivity are likely to make it extremely vulnerable to fishing pressure (Stevens and Correia, 2003).

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 calcea, 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. profondorum*) in sub-area XII (CPOA Shark, 2009).

HANDLING AND THORN ARRANGEMENT

- Handle with care.
- Dorsal spines.
- Abrasive skin and sharp teeth.

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