**PROHIBITED SHARK IDENTIFICATION**

FOR THE FISHERIES OF THE U.S. ATLANTIC, GULF OF MEXICO, AND CARIBBEAN

Less common prohibited sharks not pictured: Whale, Basking, Bigeye Sand Tiger, Sixgill, Bigeye Sixgill, Sevengill, Galapagos, Caribbean Sharpnose, Narrowtooth, and Smalltail Sharks

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**Anatomy of a Shark**

- **First dorsal fin**
- **Second dorsal fin**
- **Pectoral fin**
- **Pelvic fin**
- **Anal fin**
- **Caudal fin (tail)**
- **Fin origin**
- **Head length**
- **Fork length**
- **Snout length**
- **Long dorsal fin free tip length**

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**Ridgeback Sharks** (also known as “Brown” or “Sand” Sharks)

All Ridgeback Sharks Are Prohibited, except for Tiger, Oceanic Whitetip, and Smoothhound Sharks

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**Commonly Encountered Prohibited Non-Ridgeback Sharks**

- **Atlantic Angel Shark**: Size range 2.5-6 ft; shallop to deep water
- **Sandbar Shark**: Size range 2-8 ft; inshore shallow coastal waters. **Sandbar sharks can be retained in the shark research fishery only**.
- **Caribbean Reef Shark**: Size range 2.5-10 ft; tropical continental shelf waters
- **Silky Shark**: Size range 2.5-11 ft; offshore. **Silky sharks can be retained on commercial bottom longline and gillnet gear only**.
- **Bignose Shark**: Size range 2.5-9 ft; offshore
- **Dusky Shark**: Size range 3-12 ft; nearshore to outer continental shelf
- **Night Shark**: Size range 2-9 ft; offshore
- **Longfin Mako**: Size range 7-13 ft; offshore
- **Sand Tiger**: Size range 3.5-10 ft; surf zone and shallow bays to outer continental shelf
- **White Shark**: Size range 5-20 ft; coastal and offshore
- **Bigeeye Thresher**: Size range 3-10 ft fork length; mostly offshore

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**If You Don’t Know, Let it Go**

Release Ridgebacks

All sharks within a species are not identical; however, these are common characteristics for the majority of individuals. Young sharks can vary in appearance from adults. Size ranges are approximate.


Photographs and/or illustrations provided by NMFS, NMFS Apex Predators Program, Diane Peckles, W.B. Driggers III, and S. Iglé.
PRACTICING SAFE CATCH AND RELEASE
THE FOLLOWING ARE RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR RELEASING SHARKS FROM A VESSEL

1. To maximize survival, keep the shark in the water. Use heavy fishing tackle to minimize fight time. This will increase its chances for survival after release.

2. Place a measuring device along the side of the vessel so the shark can be measured in the water.

3. Remove the hook using a dehooking device. If you cannot remove the hook, or if removing the hook would cause danger to yourself or the shark, cut the leader as close to the hook as safety permits to minimize any trailing gear, or cut the hook itself with bolt cutters.

4. Do not gaff a shark that you plan on releasing. Use the leader to hold the shark at boatside with its head oriented into the current.

5. When releasing the shark, allow water to flow over the gills by moving the shark forward in the water, or by positioning the shark so the current flows toward the head of the animal, until its energy returns.

ALL PROHIBITED SHARKS, INCLUDING DUSKY SHARKS, MUST BE RELEASED IN THE WATER WITH A MINIMUM OF HARM.

If You Don’t Know, Let it Go
Release Ridgebacks
Photographs provided by NMFS and Mark Sampson