

**SHARK IDENTIFICATION**

# **TRUNK GUIDE**

Identification guide to commonly caught sharks  
in South Africa using trunks



# SHARK IDENTIFICATION KEY

Identification key for commonly caught inshore species in the eastern and western Cape coasts of South Africa

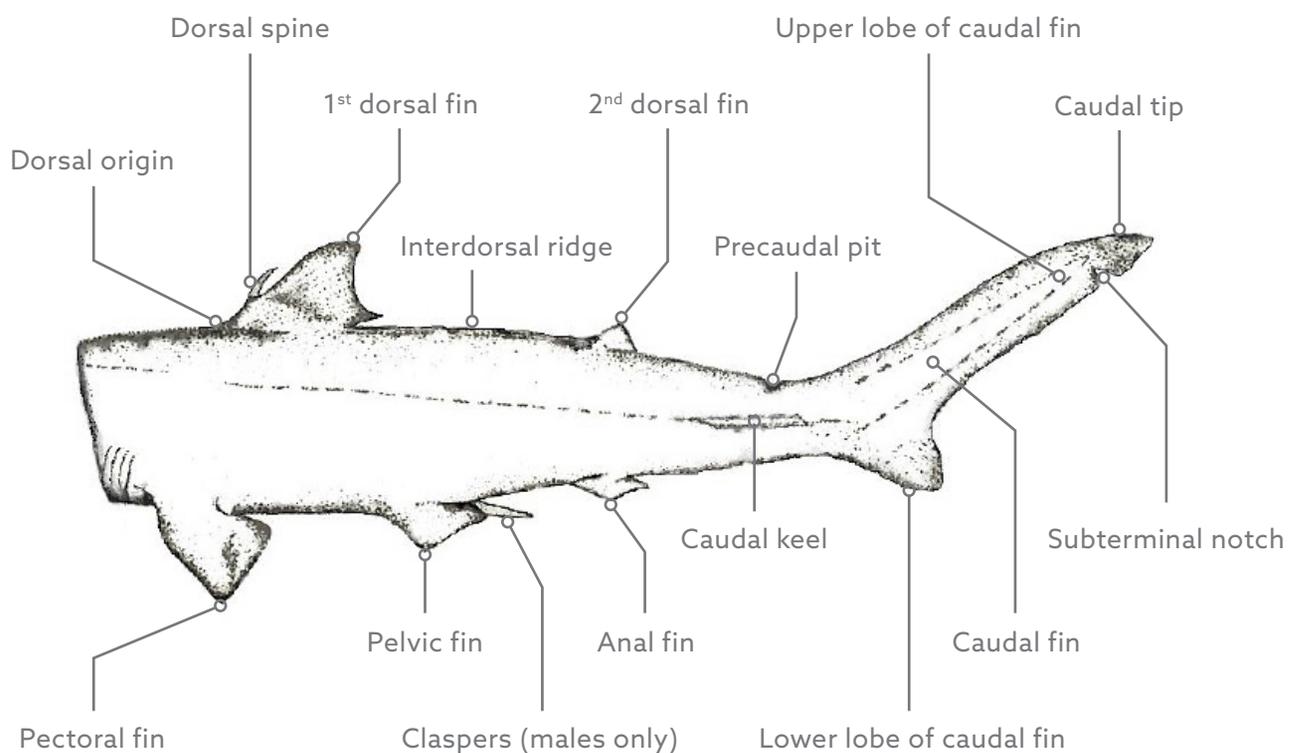
- |     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
| 1.1 | One dorsal fin; 7 gill slits; anal fin present   | <b><i>Notorynchus cepedianus</i></b>   |
| 1.2 | Two dorsal fins; 5 gill slits; anal fin present or absent                                | <b>2</b>                               |
| 2.1 | Spine on first dorsal fin, anal fin absent   | <b><i>Squalus</i> spp.</b>             |
| 2.2 | No spine on first dorsal fin, anal fin present   | <b>3</b>                               |
| 3.1 | First dorsal fin above or behind pelvic fins, body usually with distinct body patterning | <b><i>Scyliorhinidae</i></b>           |
| 3.2 | First dorsal fin in front of the pelvic fins, body without distinct uniform patterning   | <b>4</b>                               |
| 4.1 | Interdorsal ridge present  | <b>5</b>                               |
| 4.2 | Interdorsal ridge absent   | <b>8</b>                               |
| 5.1 | First and second dorsal fin similar size   | <b>6</b>                               |
| 5.2 | First dorsal fin much larger than second dorsal fin                                      | <b><i>Carcharhinus obscurus</i>*</b>   |
| 6.1 | Abrupt vertical posterior margin of 1st dorsal fin                                       | <b><i>Triakis megalopterus</i></b>     |
| 6.2 | Vertical posterior margin of 1st dorsal fin gently curved                                | <b>7</b>                               |
| 7.1 | Small white spots on body  | <b><i>Mustelus palumbes</i></b>        |
| 7.2 | No spots/ Black spots on body  | <b><i>Mustelus mustelus</i></b>        |
| 8.1 | No interdorsal ridge but with precaudal pit  | <b>9</b>                               |
| 8.2 | No interdorsal ridge nor precaudal pit   | <b><i>Galeorhinus galeus</i></b>       |
| 9.1 | First dorsal fin upright and longer than pectoral fins                                   | <b><i>Sphyrna</i> spp.*</b>            |
| 9.2 | First dorsal fin not longer than pectoral fins   | <b><i>Carcharhinus brachyurus</i>*</b> |

Identification characters of sharks are normally based on head and teeth morphology. As dressing of the sharks remove these primary identification features, this has resulted in a difficulty in identifying species. It was therefore necessary to develop a dressed demersal identification key.

This identification key was modified from Da Silva (2007) and features identification features based on headed and gutted sharks.

## ANATOMY OF A GENERALIZED SHARK

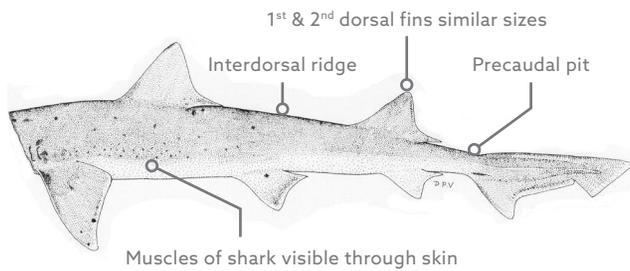
with trunk measurements to be taken



### Measurements to be taken

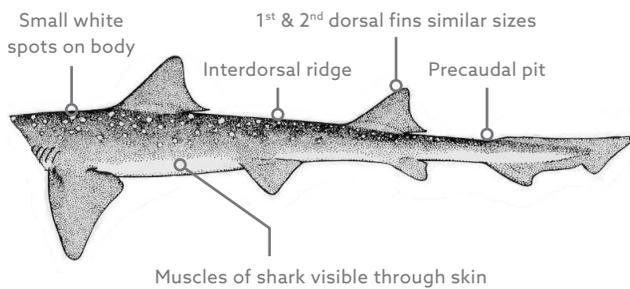
**L1** = Dorsal origin to caudal tip

**L2** = Dorsal origin to precaudal tip



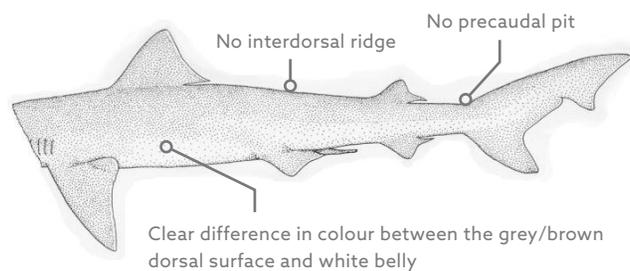
***Mustelus mustelus* (Smoothhound shark)**

Medium sized shark up to 1.7 m, common inshore. Uniform grey or brown colour with white belly, some have black spots (Smith & Heemstra, 2003)



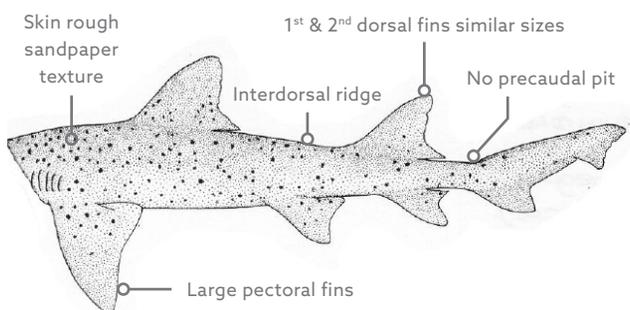
***Mustelus palumbes* (White spotted smoothhound shark)**

Small shark up to 1.2 m. Light to dark grey with numerous whitespots (Smith & Heemstra, 2003).



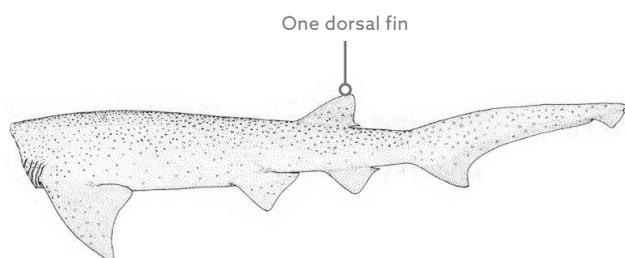
***Galeorhinus galeus* (Soupfin shark)**

Medium sized shark up to 1.9 m, commonly caught inshore, uniform grey with white belly (Smith & Heemstra, 2003).



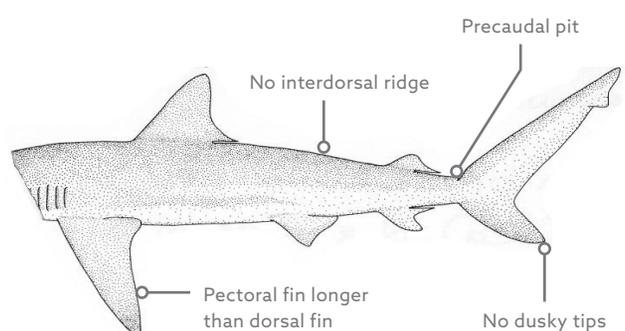
***Triakis megalopterus* (Gully shark)**

Medium sized shark, up to 1.7 m, commonly found inshore, grey/brown/bronze above with numerous small black spots, stocky body, large fins (Smith & Heemstra, 2003).



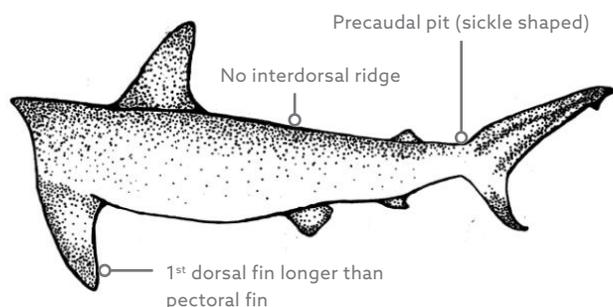
### ***Notorhynchus cepedianus* (Sevengill cow shark)**

Large shark > 3 m, commonly found close inshore, colour ranges from silvery grey to dark grey, also reddish brown to olive grey, often covered in white spots (Smith & Heemstra, 2003).



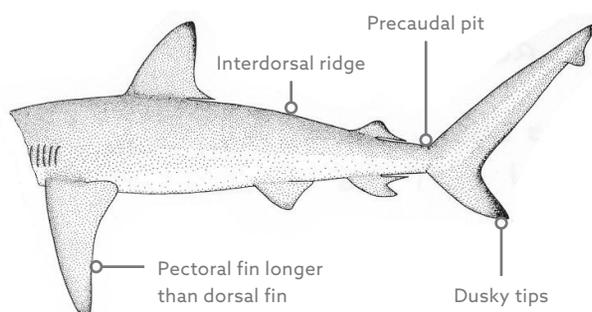
### ***Carcharhinus brachyurus* (Bronze whaler shark)**

Medium to large shark (up to 2.9 m), shiny light bronze to rich copper, however colour fades to grey / brown after capture (Smith & Heemstra, 2003).



### ***Sphyrna zygaena* (Smooth hammerhead shark)**

Medium sized shark up to 1.8 m, most frequent hammerhead shark seen in the Eastern and Southern Cape coast. Crescent shaped precaudal pit. Caudal fin has a hooked lower tip. Denticles fall off with handling leaving green blotches. (Smith & Heemstra, 2003).



### ***Carcharhinus obscurus* (Dusky shark)**

Large shark (up to 4 m), common close inshore, dark grey, with dusky tips on dorsal and ventral surfaces of fins (Smith & Heemstra, 2003).

## REFERENCES:

All diagrams except *S. zygaena* are modified with permission from Smith's Sea Fishes, 2003 – *Struik Publishes*, Smith M. M., & P.C. Heemstra, pictures by Bass, A. J. Western Australian Museum, and Heemstra, E.outh African Institute of Aquatic Biodiversity (SAIAB).

DA SILVA, C. 2007- The status and prognosis of the smoothhound shark (*Mustelus mustelus*) in fishery in the southeastern and southwestern Cape coast, M.Sc. Thesis, Department of Ichthyology and Fisheries Science, Rhodes University, 152p

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