National Environmental Research Program

MARINE BIODIVERSITY hub

SPECIES INFORMATION SHEET No. 2

Speartooth Shark *Glyphis glyphis*

Distribution

Restricted to a small number of river/estuarine systems of northern Australia:

1. NT: Daly River, Adelaide River and Alligator Rivers Region
2. QLD: Wenlock River, Ducie River and Port Musgrave (plus historical records from the Bizant River)

Also southern Papua New Guinea.

Conservation Status

International (IUCN Red List of Threatened Species): Endangered

Australia: Critically Endangered

Northern Territory: Vulnerable

- Speartooth Shark is a protected species throughout Australia.
- It has a restricted range and restricted habitat.
- Populations are thought to be small.
- It has not been seen in the Bizant River since 1982.

Speartooth Shark Identification

Three sharks occur in northern Australian rivers (Speartooth Shark, Northern River Shark and Bull Shark).

Large 2nd dorsal fin (height is about 3/4 height of 1st dorsal fin) separates Speartooth Shark/ Northern River Shark from Bull Shark:

Speartooth Shark: Waterline mark just below eye; prominent black blotches on undersides of pectoral fins (not always as dark as in the image); snout short.

Northern River Shark: Waterline mark more than an eye diameter below eye; undersides of pectoral fins often pale (although can also be dark in some individuals); snout elongate.

Speartooth Shark Biology

- Biology is very poorly-known.
- Juveniles and subadults inhabit tidal reaches of large rivers.
- Adults have never been captured or seen; their habitat is unknown (but is presumed to be coastal/ marine).
- Size at birth is ~50 cm long.
- Maximum size is unknown, but thought to be 2.5-3 m long.
- Tracking of a few sharks showed that they move with the tides, going downstream on the outgoing tide and upstream on the incoming tide.
- Being a large shark they have low productivity, which limits their ability to recover from depletion.

Research

- This Marine Biodiversity Hub Project is gaining a better understanding of Speartooth Sharks to inform management.
- DNA is collected to look at the family tree of each fish. Mathematical models are used to estimate the population size and trend (decreasing, increasing or stable).
- Speartooth Sharks are tagged to monitor movements, determine critical habitats and estimate natural mortality.

Releasing Speartooth Sharks

- Do not gaff the shark.
- If safe to do so, remove hook and all fishing line using a de-hooking device.
- If you can't remove the hook, cut the line as close to the hook as possible.
- Minimise capture & handling time as much as possible.

Remember: Speartooth Sharks are protected. Release them safely to ensure their survival, and that of the species.

Habitat

Seen a Speartooth Shark?

If you've seen or caught a Speartooth Shark, please send details to: peter.kyne@cdu.edu.au or call (08) 8946 7616

Include:
- **Location of sighting or capture**
- **Date**
- **Size (if possible)**
- **Photographs**

Prepared by Peter Kyne, Charles Darwin University.

Australian Government
Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

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Further information:
Peter Kyne
T (08) 8946 7616
Peter.Kyne@cdu.edu.au

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