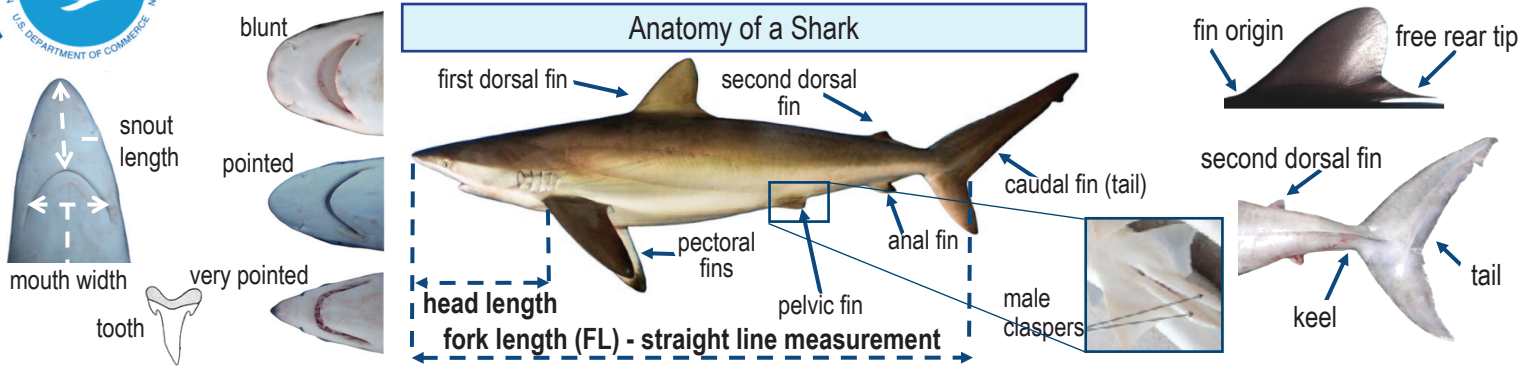




# Shark Identification and Federal Regulations

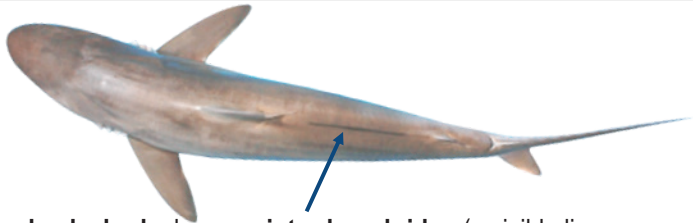
for the Recreational Fishery of the U.S. Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean



**Federal fishing permit required in federal waters. Purchase at [hmspermits.noaa.gov](https://hmspermits.noaa.gov).**  
HMS recreational permit holders that fish for sharks will need to obtain a shark endorsement.

Authorized species	Minimum size (fork length)	Bag limit (per trip)
Smoothhound Shark	None	None
Atlantic sharpnose Shark	None	1 per person
Bonnethead Shark	None	1 per person
Shortfin Mako Shark	71 inches male 83 inches female	1 shortfin mako, hammerhead, or other shark per vessel
Hammerheads (great, scalloped, and smooth)	78 inches	
Other sharks	54 inches	

Recreational anglers are required to use non-offset, non-stainless steel circle hooks except when fishing with flies or artificial lures.



All ridgeback sharks are prohibited, except **Tiger, Oceanic Whitetip, and Smoothhound**.

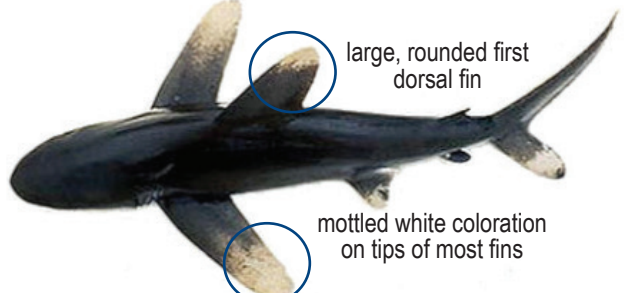
Prohibited ridgeback sharks include **Bignose, Caribbean Reef, Dusky, Galapagos, Night, Sandbar, and Silky**. For more details on prohibited species, please refer to the Prohibited Species Placard.

**Ridgeback sharks** have an **interdorsal ridge** (a visible line, or crease of raised skin between dorsal fins)



blunt snout

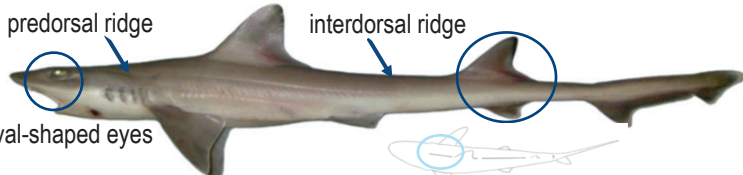
**Tiger Shark:** Snout length much shorter than mouth width; markings fade with age; max. size 15 feet; coastal and offshore



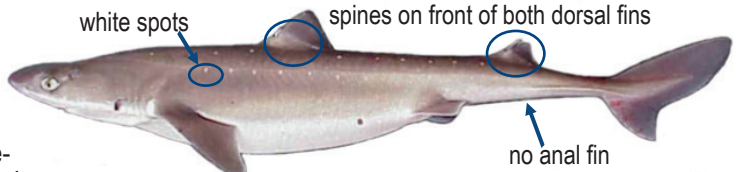
large, rounded first dorsal fin

mottled white coloration on tips of most fins

**Oceanic Whitetip Shark:** Young sharks have black mottling on most fins; does not always have interdorsal ridge; max. size 8 ft; offshore  
**Cannot be retained if tuna, swordfish, or billfish are onboard**



**Smoothhound:** (a.k.a. smooth dogfish and Florida/Gulf smouthound) Pre-dorsal ridge present; second dorsal fin slightly smaller than first dorsal fin and much larger than anal fin; max. size 5ft; coastal and offshore



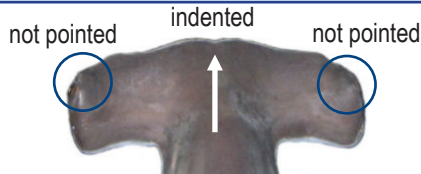
**Spiny Dogfish:** Max. size 4 ft; coastal and offshore  
There are no recreational restrictions for **Spiny Dogfish**

## Scalloped Hammerheads, Great Hammerheads, and Smooth Hammerheads

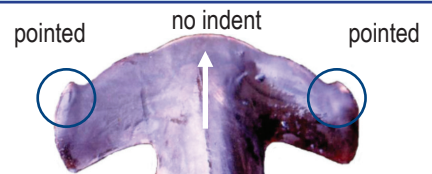
**Cannot be retained if tuna, swordfish, or billfish are onboard**



**Scalloped Hammerhead:** Max. size 11 ft; coastal and offshore

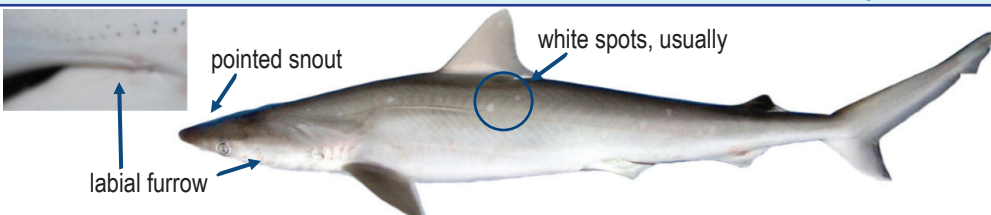


**Great Hammerhead:** Max. size 15 ft; coastal and offshore



**Smooth Hammerhead:** Max. size 12 ft; coastal and offshore

The is no minimum size for **Atlantic Sharpnose** or **Bonnethead Sharks**



**Atlantic Sharpnose Shark:** Max. size 3 ft; coastal and offshore; similar species: **Smalltail** sharks have very reduced labial furrows and **Caribbean Sharpnose** sharks lack white spots.



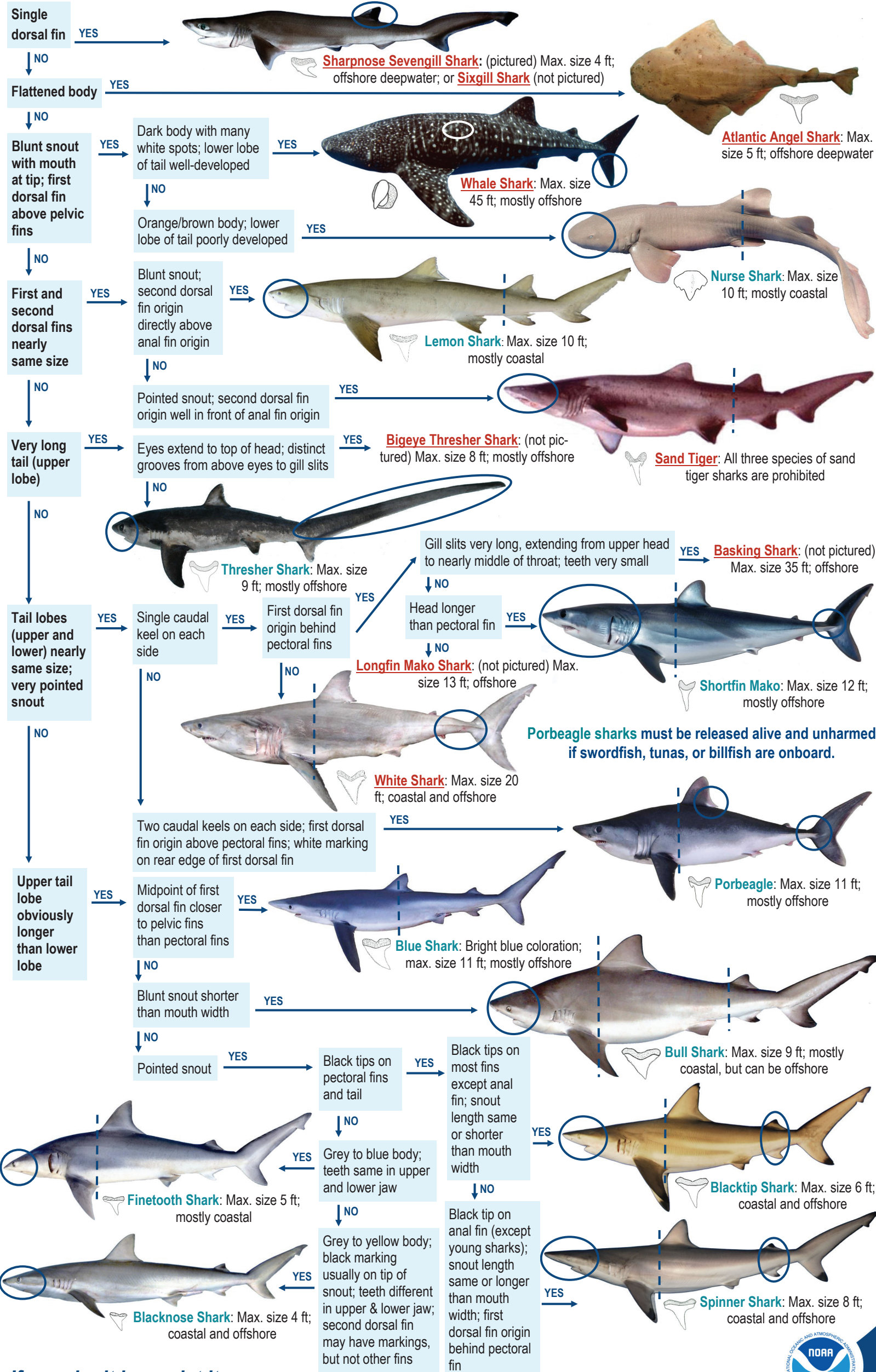
**Bonnethead:** small, black spots on body; max. size 4 ft; mostly coastal

All sharks are not identical. These are common characteristics. Young sharks can vary in appearance from adults. Maximum sizes are approximate.

Photographs and illustrations provided by NMFS, J. Castro, W.B. Driggers III, E.R. Hoffmayer, and S. Iglésias. **Prohibited species are underlined in red**  
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/topic/atlantic-highly-migratory-species>. Revised March 2019

**If you don't know, let it go**

# Use this key to identify non-ridgeback sharks



**Porbeagle sharks must be released alive and unharmed if swordfish, tunas, or billfish are onboard.**

**If you don't know, let it go**

All species that may be retained in Federal waters are shown on this placard | Prohibited species are underlined in red

