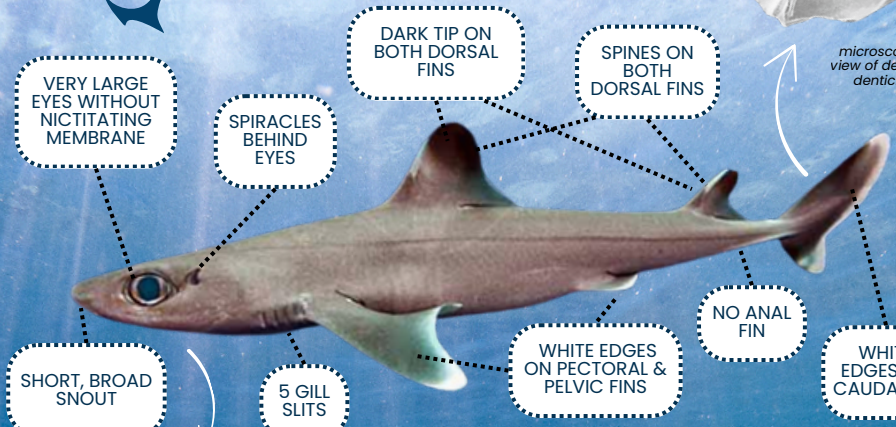
SHARK NECROPSY
WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT

Cuban dogfish skin has a sandpaper-like texture due to tiny, tooth-like scales called dermal denticles. These scales point towards the tail, helping to reduce drag when the shark swims.

microscopic view of dermal denticle



A Cuban dogfish's mouth contains rows of small, serrated teeth designed to crush hard-shelled prey.

CAYMAN BRAC NO. 1
CUBAN DOGFISH
SQUALUS CUBENSIS

TODAY WE WILL DIVE DEEPER TO DISCOVER THE **CUBAN DOGFISH** IN CAYMAN! CUBAN DOGFISH ARE SMALL, BOTTOM DWELLING CREATURES THAT SPEND MUCH OF THEIR TIME AT VERY DEEP DEPTHS.

Department of Environment
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ALL SHARKS ARE FISH! SHARKS BREATHE VIA GILLS BUT NOT EVERY SHARK SPECIES HAS THE SAME FEATURES. EACH SPECIES HAS ADAPTED TO THEIR SPECIFIC HABITAT, BEHAVIOUR, AND PREY. SOME SHARKS GIVE BIRTH TO LIVE YOUNG AND OTHERS LAY EGGS! MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CAYMAN'S SHARKS: WWW.DOE.KY/MARINE/SHARKS

Date _____ Species _____

Total Length _____ Age ____ Sex _____

Any injuries, parasites, markings? _____

_____

Cause of death _____

IUCN RED LIST OF THREATENED SPECIES STATUS: LEAST CONCERN
(ASSESSED IN 2019)

SHARK NECROPSY
WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT

CAYMAN BRAC NO. 1
CUBAN DOGFISH
SQUALUS CUBENSIS

GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION: This small deep-water shark is widely distributed in tropical and subtropical waters of the Western Atlantic Ocean, ranging from North Carolina to southern Argentina, including the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea.

HABITAT: Rocky reefs, sandy and muddy sea floors of deep-water continental and coastal shelves from 50m (164ft) to 904m (2,966ft).

LENGTH & AGE
At birth: 25-27cm (9-10in)
Sexual maturity: FOR MALES at about 38cm (1.2ft);
FOR FEMALES at about 47cm (1.5ft)
Maximum estimated age: 32 - 54+ years
Maximum recorded length: 110cm (3.6ft)

Reproduction: ovoviviparous
(live young via internal eggs)
Females carry 1-12 shark pups for 22-24 months in the uterus. The female lays 'eggs' inside the uterus where each pup is attached to a yolk sac until they are ready to be born. The female gives birth to live baby sharks, head first so that the spines on the forst and second dorsal fin don't injure the mother. Immediately after birth, each newborn shark is on its own. Newborns must learn how to hunt and find shelter from bigger predators without any guidance from their mother (or father), that is why many baby sharks will not survive their first few years.

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CUBAN DOGFISH IN THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

ESTIMATED POPULATION SIZE: In Cayman, only Caribbean reef sharks and nurse sharks were estimated at about 180 and 350 individuals (assessed in 2019, DoE), respectively. The other shark species, including the Cuban dogfish are too few or too infrequently observed.

HABITAT: This shark likes deep water and spends most of its time between 50-400m (164-1,312ft) on rocky deep water reefs, sandy and muddy sea floor. Cuban dogfish do not only hunt at night but have adapted to the all time low light levels at depth. It has large eyes with a special layer (*Tapetum Lucidum*) that helps the dogfish to 'see' better at low light conditions at depth. This way it can hunt during the day and night.

PREY SPECIES: Cuban dogfish eat creatures that live on the sea floor. It's favorite fish are mackerels, tunas and bonitos but it also likes shrimp, squid, octopus, crabs, and muscles. Sometimes algae has been found in the stomach of Cuban dogfish, but this likely was swallowed incidentally while snatching other prey at the bottom. Cuban dogfish like to hang out in large schools and hunt in packs, working together allows them to be more successful in catching their next meal.

PREDATORS: Cuban dogfish do have natural predators. In Cayman, other sharks that are larger and also swim at deeper depths such as Caribbean reef sharks, tiger sharks, hammerheads, sixgill sharks, and sevengill sharks may hunt the Cuban dogfish.

THREATS & DANGERS: Effects of deep water fishing activities, pollution, abandoned fishing gear

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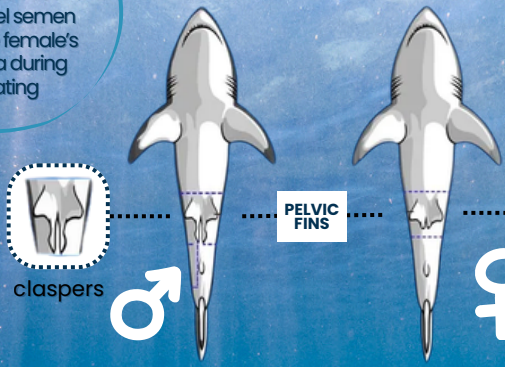
GENERAL SHARK ANATOMY

SHARK NECROPSY
WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT

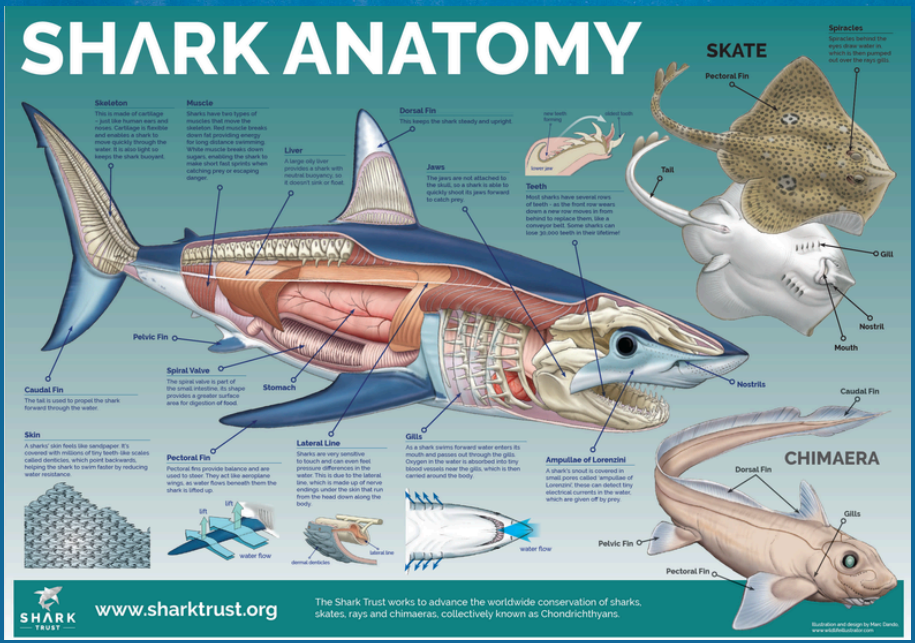
Male & Female

Male sharks have two claspers. These are used to channel semen into the female's cloaca during mating

Female sharks have thicker skin and tend to be larger. Male sharks will bite the female to hold on to her during mating



SHARK ANATOMY



SHARK TRUST
www.sharktrust.org

The Shark Trust works to advance the worldwide conservation of sharks, skates, rays and chimaeras, collectively known as Chondrichthyans.

Illustration and design by Marc Dando.
www.wildlifeillustrator.com