



Photo Courtesy of Chad Macfie

Atlantic Sharpnose Shark *Rhizoprionodon terraenovae*

Range: The Atlantic Sharpnose Shark inhabits the western Atlantic from New Brunswick, Canada south to the Gulf of Mexico and along the coast of Brazil. They prefer subtropical waters near the continental shelf from the intertidal zone to waters reaching depths of up to 920ft (280m). The Atlantic Sharpnose Shark typically spends its time near the surf zone of sandy beaches and in enclosed bays, sounds, and harbors. Because of their ability to tolerate low salinity levels, they can also be found in estuaries and at the mouth of rivers.

Similar Species: The white spotting and size of the Atlantic Sharpnose distinguish it from most other species of sharks in Volusia County waters. However, the Spiny Dogfish (*Squalus acanthias*), which is similar in appearance to the Atlantic Sharpnose, also has white spots and occasionally enters Volusia waters during the winter months as it follows the cold water moving south from the north. The Spiny Dogfish can be distinguished by the strong dorsal spines in front of each dorsal fin.

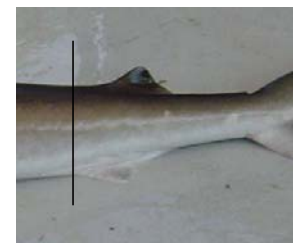


Spiny Dogfish



Spine in front of dorsal fin on Spiny Dogfish

Identification: The Atlantic Sharpnose shark has a long, streamlined body that is gray in color as well as a characteristically long, pointed snout. In most sharks, the anal fin and second dorsal fin are lined up, one directly above the other. However, in the Atlantic Sharpnose shark the anal fin is slightly in front of the second dorsal fin. This species of shark is considered to be a small coastal shark, reaching a maximum length of about 3.5 ft (1m).



Depiction of anal and second dorsal fin alignment

Note: The Atlantic Sharpnose shark gives live birth to 1-7 pups per litter. At birth, pups are 11-14in (29-37cm) in length and will grow at a rate of 2 inches (5cm) a month for the first 3 months. Growth rate then slows to an average of .1 inches (.35 cm) a month. This species is considered non-harmful to humans and typically feeds on small bony fishes, shrimps, crabs, segmented worms, mollusks, and gastropods.