

Common Sharks of the Northern Gulf of Mexico

So you caught a sand shark?

Estuaries are ecosystems where fresh and saltwater meet and mix. Estuaries provide nursery grounds for a wide variety of invertebrate species such as oysters, shrimp, and blue crabs along finfishes including croaker, red drum, spotted seatrout, tarpon, menhaden, flounder and many others.

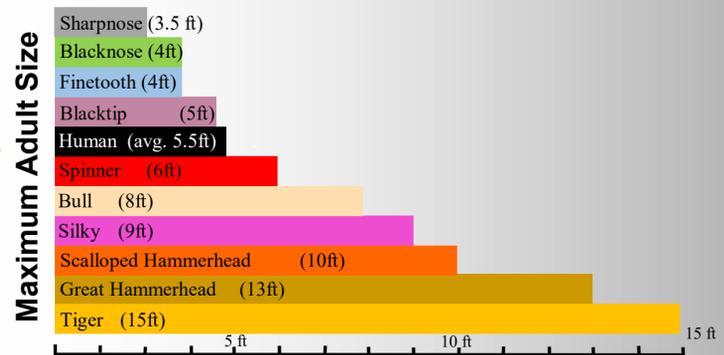
Because of this abundance, larger animals patrol coastal Gulf waters for food. Among these predators are a number of shark species.

The northern Gulf of Mexico is home to several shark species. A few of these species very closely resemble one another and are commonly referred to as “sand sharks.”

This infographic will help you quickly differentiate between the different “sand sharks” and also help you identify a few common offshore species.



Maximum size of the coastal sharks are depicted in scale

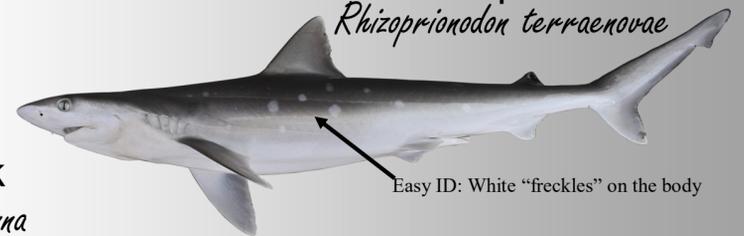


Blacktip shark
Carcharhinus limbatus



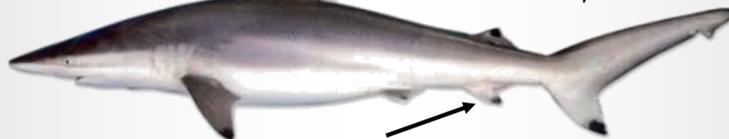
Easy ID: Pointed snout, anal fin lacks a black tip

Atlantic sharpnose shark
Rhizoprionodon terraenovae



Easy ID: White “freckles” on the body

Spinner shark
Carcharhinus brevipinna



Easy ID: Black tip on anal fin present

Blacknose shark
Carcharhinus acronotus



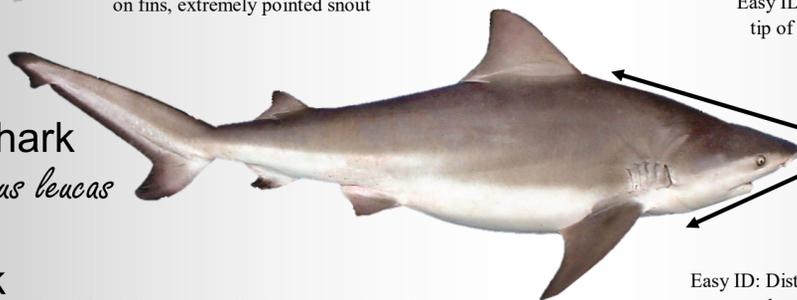
Easy ID: Distinct black smudge on the tip of the snout, feisty when caught

Finetooth shark
Carcharhinus isodon



Easy ID: Distinct lack of black markings on fins, extremely pointed snout

Bull shark
Carcharhinus leucas



Easy ID: Blacktip on fins present, large robust body, short snout

Tiger shark
Galeocerdo cuvier



Easy ID: Distinct spot and stripe pattern down the body in juveniles

Great hammerhead
Sphyrna mokarran



Easy ID: Distinct flat hammerhead, and extremely tall pronounced dorsal fin

Scalloped hammerhead
Sphyrna lewini



Easy ID: Distinct “scalloping” and rounding of hammerhead

Gulper shark
Centrophorus granulosus



Easy ID: Distinct luminous green eye, pupil

Easy ID: Interdorsal ridge down back, “silky” smooth skin, rounded dorsal fin

Silky shark
Carcharhinus falciformes

