

## SCIENTIFIC NAME

*Alopias vulpinus* (Bonnaterre, 1788).

## DISTRIBUTION

Almost circumglobal in tropical and cold temperate seas. East Atlantic from Norway to Cape Province, South Africa, including the Mediterranean Sea<sup>ii</sup>.



## COMMON NAME

**THRESHER SHARK**, Common Thresher, Thintail Thresher, Fox Shark, Sea Fox, Swiveltail, Thrasher, Renard (Fr), Faux (Fr), Zorro (Es), Chichi Espada (Es).

## IDENTIFICATION

- 1 Dorsal caudal lobe greatly elongated, as long as rest of body.
- 2 Pointed snout with small, arched mouth.
- 3 Large first dorsal and pectoral fins<sup>ii</sup>.

## COLOUR

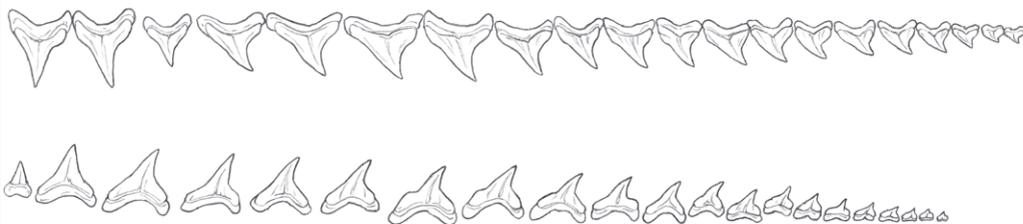
- Grey, blue, brown or blackish dorsally.
- Pectoral, pelvic and dorsal fins blackish.
- White spots sometimes present on fin tips.
- Ventrally white to above the pectoral fins<sup>ii</sup>.

## BIOLOGY AND SIZE

- Born: 114–160cm<sup>vi</sup>. Mature: 330cm ♀, 260–450cm ♂. Max TL: 760cm<sup>iv</sup>.
- Maintains its body temperature through a heat-exchange system allowing it to range into temperate regions<sup>v</sup>.
- Uses its tail to disorientate, stun and kill prey<sup>iv</sup>.
- Feeds primarily on schooling fish such as mackerel, bluefishes and needlefishes, also squid, octopi, crustaceans and seabirds<sup>iii</sup>.



## TEETH

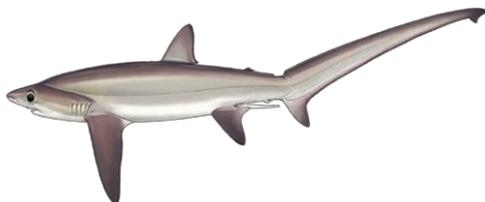


- Small, blade like, smooth edged teeth.
- 40 (20–20) in upper jaw, 42 (21–21) in lower jaw<sup>iv</sup>.

## SIMILAR SPECIES



- Alopias vulpinus*, **Thresher Shark**



- Alopias superciliosus*, **Bigeye Thresher Shark**

## HABITAT

- Pelagic species found from the surface to 336m<sup>ii</sup>, possibly to 550m.
- Give birth inshore, where young remain until close to maturity.
- Segregate by size and sex<sup>vi</sup>.

## CONSERVATION STATUS

- Targeted fisheries have lead to stock declines in some areas. Significant numbers are taken as bycatch across its range<sup>iii</sup>.
- Red List status:** Vulnerable (2008).  
Near Threatened in northeast Atlantic.

## COMMERCIAL IMPORTANCE

- Taken mostly as bycatch in the northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea.
- Meat and fins are highly prized. Liver oil has previously been processed for vitamins<sup>ii</sup>.
- Sought by recreational anglers as it is a hard fighting species which regularly breaches when hooked<sup>iii</sup>.
- 2010 – Prohibition on commercial fishers targeting this species in the ICCAT convention area.

## HANDLING

- Handle with care.
- Long, powerful tail can cause serious injury.
- Potentially dangerous bite. Sharp teeth and powerful jaws.

## REFERENCES

- i. Carpenter, K. E.; 2009. FishBase.
- ii. Compagno, L. J. V.; 1984. FAO.
- iii. Goldman, K. J. *et al*; 2002. IUCN Red List.
- iv. Jordan, V; Unknown. FLMNH.
- v. Martin, R. A.; 1992. ReefQuest Centre for Shark Research.
- vi. Smith, S. E. *et al*; 2008. Blackwell Publishing.