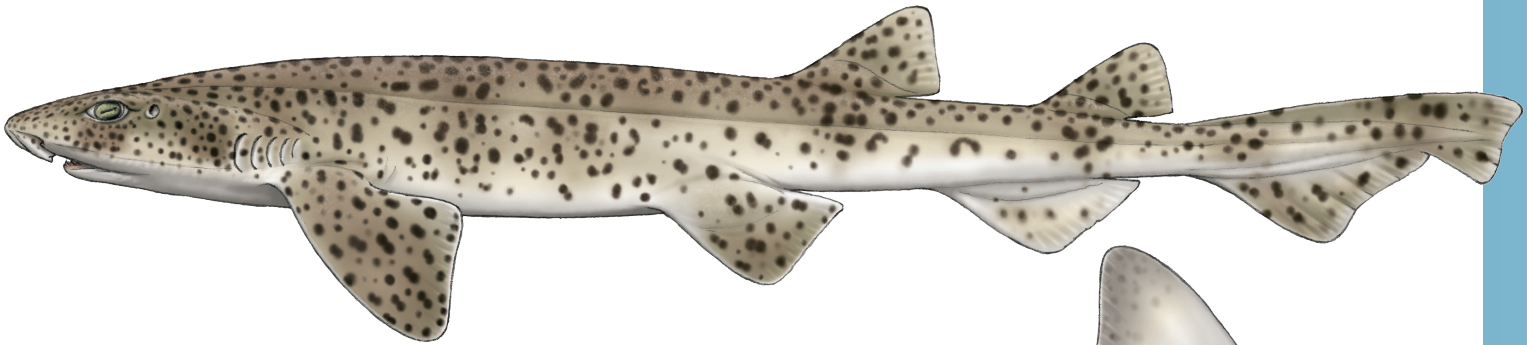
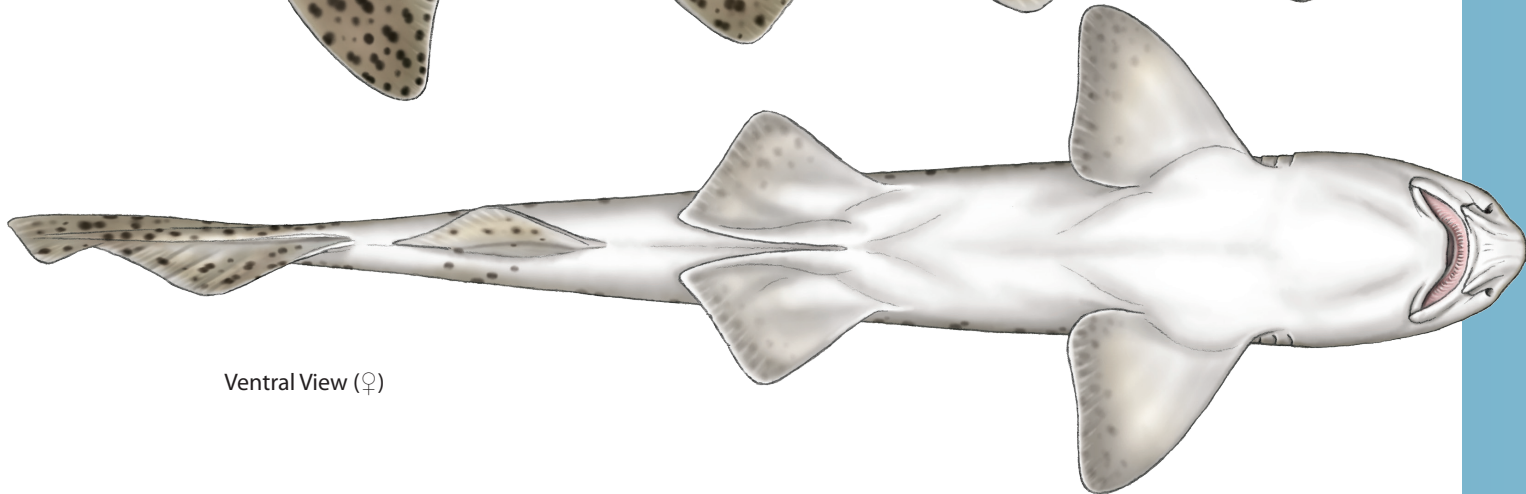


Lateral View (♀)



Ventral View (♀)



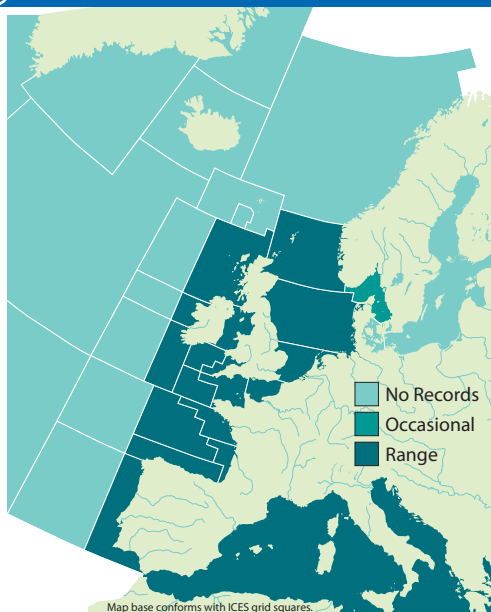
COMMON NAMES

Nursehound, Bull Huss, Greater Spotted Catshark, Greater Spotted Dogfish, Flake, Rigg, Grande Roussette (Fr), Alitán (Es).

SYNONYMS

Squalus stellaris (Linnaeus, 1758), *Scyllium catulus* (Müller & Henle, 1838), *Scyllium acanthotum* (Filippi and Verany, 1853), *Scyliorhinus besnardi* (Springer & Sadowsky, 1970).

DISTRIBUTION



The Nursehound is known in the northeast Atlantic from southern Scandinavia and the British Isles to at least Morocco, including the Mediterranean Sea. Its presence in tropical west Africa from Senegal to Zaire is uncertain and may be due to misidentifications of the West African Catshark, *Scyliorhinus cervigoni* (Compagno, 1984).

APPEARANCE

- Two dorsal fins without spines.
- First dorsal fin larger than second, originates over pelvic fins.
- Second dorsal fin originates over or slightly behind anal fin.
- Almost straight caudal fin with large ventral lobe.
- Nasal furrows **do not** reach mouth.
- 162cm maximum total length. Common to 130cm
- Creamy brown dorsally with numerous dark spots.
- Occasionally also white spots.
- White ventrally.

A large catshark which can reach up to 160cm in length, the Nursehound can be found throughout the northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean. The head is moderately short and broad. On the underside there are no nasoral grooves and labial furrows on the lower jaw only. The small anterior nasal flaps **do not** reach the mouth. The pectoral fins are relatively large. The first dorsal fin is set well back along the body, above the pelvic fins. The second dorsal fin is set above the anal fin. There are no dorsal fin spines. The caudal fin is long and almost straight with a well developed ventral lobe (Compagno, 1984).

Colouration is pale brown dorsally, white ventrally. There is a pattern of numerous large and small dark/black spots and occasionally white spots on the back. It grows to a maximum size of 162cm, although it is more commonly found to a maximum of 130cm (Compagno, 1984).



SIMILAR SPECIES

Scyliorhinus canicula, Small Spotted Catshark

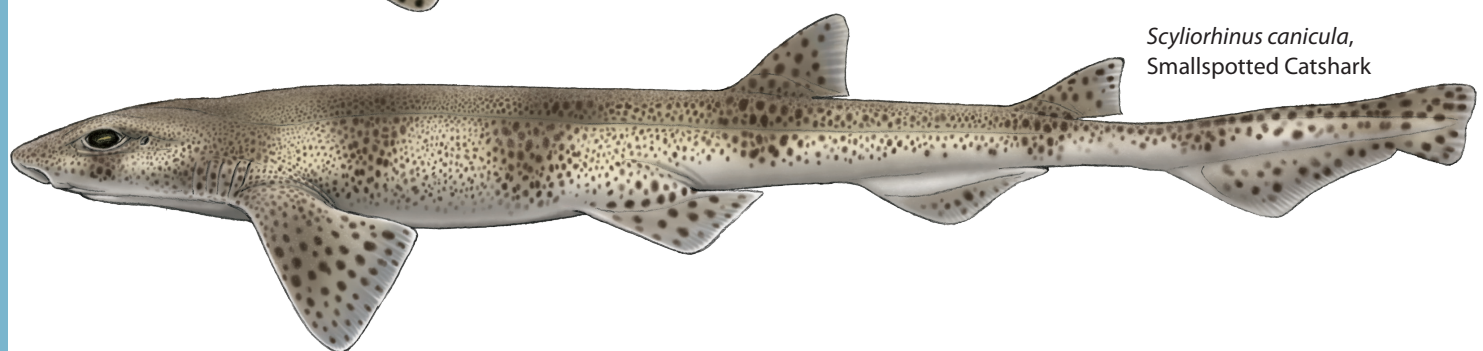
Galeus melastomus, Blackmouth Catshark

Galeus atlanticus, Atlantic Sawtail Catshark

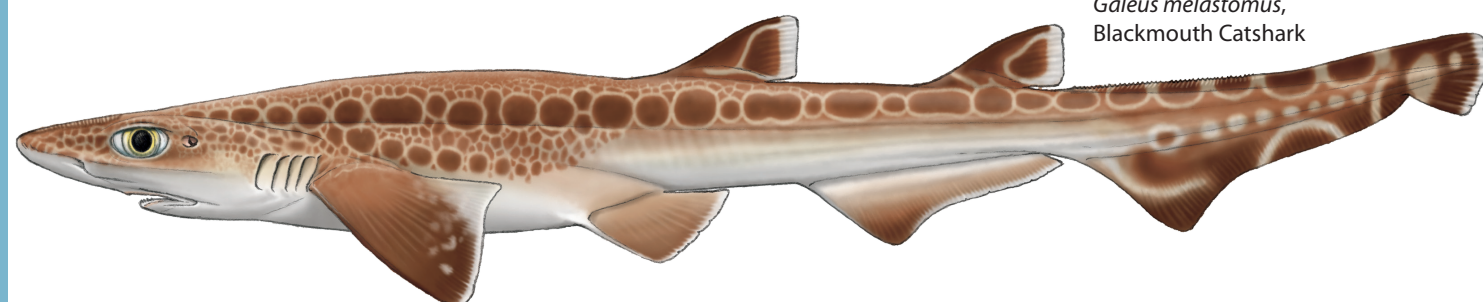
Galeus murinus, Mouse Catshark



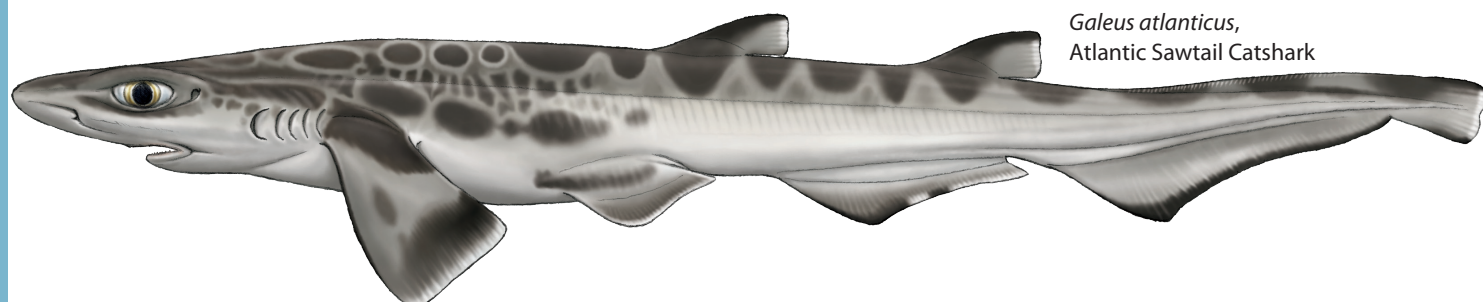
Scyliorhinus stellaris,
Nursehound



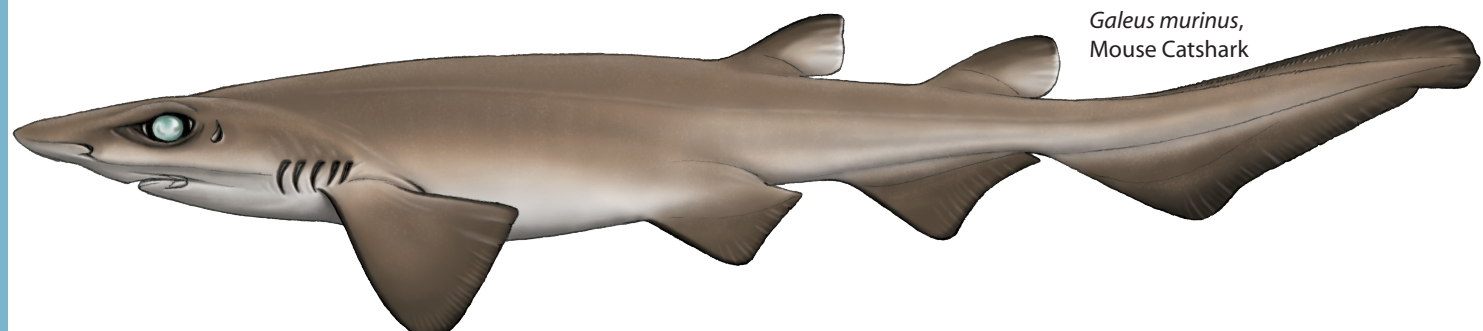
Scyliorhinus canicula,
Smallspotted Catshark



Galeus melastomus,
Blackmouth Catshark



Galeus atlanticus,
Atlantic Sawtail Catshark

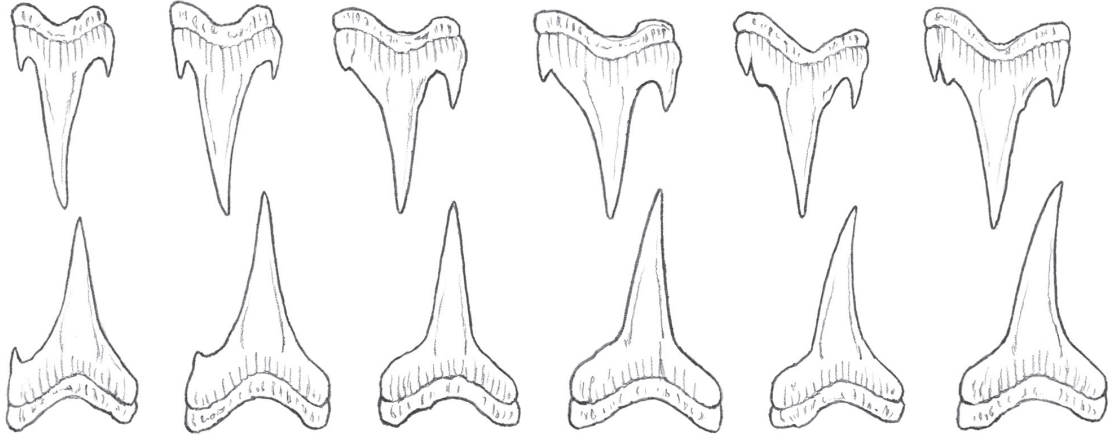


Galeus murinus,
Mouse Catshark

(Not to scale)

TEETH

There are 44–56 teeth in the upper jaw, including 0–2 symphyseal teeth and 38–46 teeth in the lower jaw, including 2–4 symphyseal teeth. The front teeth are single-cusped and erect, further back in the jaw they develop cuspets (Soldo *et al.*, 2000).



ECOLOGY AND BIOLOGY

HABITAT

The Nursehound can be found to 125m but is most common around 20–63m. It seems to have a preference for rough/rocky ground or areas with good algal cover. It is locally abundant in some places and is regularly encountered by divers, though not as commonly as the Small Spotted Catshark, *Scyliorhinus canicula* (Compagno, 1984).

EGGCASE

- 9cm in length (excluding horns).
 - 3cm in width.
 - Long tendrils from each corner (Compagno, 1984).
- Similar eggcase to the Small Spotted Catshark, *Scyliorhinus canicula*.

DIET

The Nursehound feeds on a wide variety of prey but crustaceans dominate, particularly hermit crabs, swimming crabs, cancrid crabs and large shrimp. It also feeds on molluscs such as squid and octopi and a number of bony fish including mackerel, epigonids, dragonets, gurnards, flatfish, herring, and small codfish. It is also known to feed on the closely related Small Spotted Catshark, *Scyliorhinus canicula* (Compagno, 1984).

REPRODUCTION

Relatively little is known of the reproductive biology of the Nursehound except that it is an oviparous species with an incubation period of between 9 and 11 months. Egg laying appears to occur during spring and summer in shallow water. It is thought that the Fal Estuary in Cornwall is an extensive and important laying area and nursery ground for the species due to the large number of eggcases and animals found there (Orton, 1926). From eggcase surveys, the Llŷn Peninsula in North Wales also appears to be important (Hood and Reeve, pers comm.). The eggs are large, around 9cm long and 3cm wide. Garstang (1894) notes that breeding around Plymouth occurs during November, December and January, although it is unclear if this refers to mating, laying or hatching (Garstang, 1894). The pups emerge measuring around 16cm in length (Compagno, 1984).

COMMERCIAL IMPORTANCE

The Nursehound is mostly taken as bycatch but is also targeted throughout its range by bottom trawls, gill nets, bottom set longlines, handlines, fixed bottom nets and occasionally pelagic trawls. It is utilised fresh or dried salted for human consumption and can be processed into fishmeal (Gibson *et al.*, 2006).

THREATS, CONSERVATION, LEGISLATION

Around the British Isles the Nursehound can be locally abundant, particularly around the coasts of Pembrokeshire, Anglesey, the Llŷn Peninsula and Cardigan Bay. However, it may be at risk of localised depletion. It is often fished with bottom trawls, gill nets, bottom set longlines, handlines, fixed bottom nets and even pelagic trawls. Limited data is available on exploitation and abundance trends, although declines have been recorded in the northwest Mediterranean (Gibson *et al.*, 2006).

While little is known of the biology of the Nursehound, it is a late maturing species with low fecundity. Combined with a limited level of interconnectivity between island populations, the species has a low potential level of recovery. It lives entirely within the depth range heavily exploited by near shore fisheries and as such, is likely to have seen significant population declines (Gibson *et al.*, 2006).

IUCN RED LIST ASSESSMENT

Near Threatened (2008).

HANDLING AND THORN ARRANGEMENT

- Handle with care.
- Sharp teeth.
- Abrasive skin.

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Illustrations: Marc Dando.

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