

= Quagga catshark =

The quagga catshark (*Halaelurus quagga*) is a species of catshark , belonging to the family Scyliorhinidae . A small , slim @-@ bodied shark reaching 37 cm (15 in) in length , it has a distinctive color pattern of narrow , dark brown vertical bars , which resemble those of the quagga . Its head is short and flattened , with a pointed snout tip that is not upturned .

Little is known of the quagga catshark 's natural history , as it is known only from nine specimens caught off southwestern India and eastern Somalia . Inhabiting the offshore waters of continental shelf at depths of 59 ? 220 m (194 ? 722 ft) or more , it is a bottom @-@ dwelling predator of shrimps . It exhibits an oviparous mode of reproduction , with a record of a female containing eight eggs that were enclosed in brown capsules bearing long tendrils at the corners . The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) presently lacks sufficient data to assess the conservation status of this species . It is not economically valued but is taken as bycatch .

= = Taxonomy = =

The first specimen of the quagga catshark was a 27 cm (11 in) long adult male collected by the paddle steamer RIMS Investigator from a depth of 187 m (614 ft) off the Malabar Coast of India . It was described by British naturalist Alfred William Alcock in A Descriptive Catalogue of the Indian Deep @-@ sea Fishes in the Indian Museum , published in 1899 . He assigned the new species to the genus *Scyllium* (a synonym of *Scyliorhinus*) and named it after the quagga (*Equus quagga quagga*) because of their similar color patterns . Later authors moved this species to the genus *Halaelurus* .

Only nine quagga catshark specimens have been recorded . In addition to Alcock 's type specimen , four males were trawled from off the eastern Somalian coast by the research ship RV Anton Bruun in 1964 . Four more individuals , two male and two female , were found amongst the contents of commercial fishing trawls conducted off Quilon , India in 2010 . A male specimen reported from the Gulf of Aden in 1939 was later re @-@ identified as a speckled catshark (*H. boesemani*) .

= = Description = =

Slender and firm @-@ bodied , the quagga catshark has a short and flattened head with a pointed snout . The slightly protruding tip of the snout is not upturned like in some other *Halaelurus* species . The anterior rims of the nostrils bear triangular flaps of skin . The small , horizontally oval eyes are placed high on the head and have rudimentary nictitating membranes ; below the eyes are thick ridges , and behind them are tiny spiracles . The rather large mouth is curved , with the upper teeth exposed when closed . There are short furrows at the corners of the mouth . The jaws contain 26 ? 28 upper and 27 lower tooth rows on each side ; in addition , there are three tooth rows at the upper symphysis (jaw midpoint) and one row at the lower . The teeth have three cusps . The five pairs of gill slits are placed higher than the level of the mouth ; the fifth pair are smaller than the rest .

The moderately large and rounded pectoral fins are positioned fairly close to the pelvic fins . Adult males have thin , tapering claspers with a denticle @-@ covered knob on the outer side near the tip . The first dorsal fin is placed just behind the pelvic fin bases , while the larger second dorsal fin is placed just behind the anal fin . The anal fin is larger than the second dorsal fin and comparable in size to the pelvic fins . The caudal fin has a small but discernible lower lobe and a large upper lobe with a notch in its trailing margin . The thick skin is covered by dermal denticles , which have arrowhead @-@ shaped crowns with a central ridge and three posterior teeth . This shark has a striking dorsal color pattern consisting of over 20 narrow , dark brown vertical bars on a light brown background ; the bars run from the head to the tail and extend onto the dorsal fins . The underside is off @-@ white , and the pectoral , pelvic , and anal fins have pale trailing margins . The largest known specimen is 37 cm (15 in) long .

= = Distribution and habitat = =

The known specimens of the quagga catshark have been collected from the Laccadive Sea off southwestern India and from the Indian Ocean off Somalia . The Indian sharks were caught between the depths of 90 and 220 m (300 and 720 ft) or possibly 280 m (920 ft) , while the Somalian sharks were caught at depths of 59 to 70 m (194 to 230 ft) . This is a bottom @-@ dwelling species found far from shore over the continental shelf .

= = Biology and ecology = =

The diet of the quagga catshark consists of deep @-@ living shrimps . Its reproduction is oviparous like the other members of its genus . One of the female Indian specimens was gravid with eight eggs , divided evenly between the two oviducts . The eggs are enclosed in brown purse @-@ shaped capsules measuring 3 @.@ 8 ? 4 @.@ 0 cm (1 @.@ 5 ? 1 @.@ 6 in) in length , with long coiled tendrils at their four corners . The smallest known specimen is 8 cm (3 @.@ 1 in) long , which is probably close to the size at hatching . Males reach sexual maturity at between 28 and 35 cm (11 and 14 in) long ; female maturation size is unknown .

= = Human interactions = =

The quagga catshark is harmless and is not utilized by humans . It is caught incidentally by demersal fisheries in bottom trawls and potentially other gear ; such fishing activity is very intense in Indian and Somalian waters , though specific data on this species is lacking . Therefore , the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has listed it as Data Deficient .