

= Creek whaler =

The creek whaler (*Carcharhinus fitzroyensis*) is a common species of requiem shark , and part of the family Carcharhinidae , endemic to northern Australia . It frequents shallow waters close to shore , including estuaries . This small , stocky shark usually grows to 1 @. @ 0 ? 1 @. @ 3 m (3 @. @ 3 ? 4 @. @ 3 ft) long and is brownish in color without conspicuous fin markings . It can be identified by its long snout , large , triangular pectoral fins , and large , anteriorly positioned first dorsal fin .

The diet of the creek whaler consists mainly of small teleost fishes and crustaceans . It is viviparous , with the unborn young being sustained through a placental connection . The defined mating season lasts from May to July . Females give birth to one to seven pups annually , following a gestation period of seven to 9 months . A small number of creek whalers are caught incidentally in inshore gillnets and used for food , but the effect of fishing on its population seems to be inconsequential . As a result , the IUCN has listed this species under Least Concern .

= = Taxonomy and phylogeny = =

The creek whaler was described by Australian ichthyologist Gilbert Percy Whitley in a 1943 volume of Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales . He assigned the new species to the subgenus *Uranganops* of the genus *Galeolamna* , and gave it the specific epithet *fitzroyensis* because the type specimen , a 1 @. @ 2 @-@ m @-@ long female , was collected from Connor 's Creek in the Fitzroy River estuary . Subsequent authors have synonymized *Galeolamna* with *Carcharhinus* .

The evolutionary relationships of the creek whaler have yet to be fully resolved . In comparative morphological studies published by Jack Garrick in 1982 and Leonard Compagno in 1988 , it was tentatively placed in a grouping defined by the whitecheek shark (*C. dussumieri*) and the blackspot shark (*C. sealei*) . Shane Lavery , in a 1992 study based on allozymes , reported that this species was close to the nervous shark (*C. cautus*) and the blacktip reef shark (*C. melanopterus*) . Ximena Vélez @-@ Zuazoa and Ingi Agnarsson , in a 2011 study based on nuclear and mitochondrial genes , found it to be the basal member of a clade also containing the graceful shark (*C. amblyrhynchoides*) , the blacktip shark (*C. limbatus*) , and the Australian blacktip shark (*C. tilstoni*) .

= = Description = =

The body of the creek whaler is spindle @-@ shaped and rather stocky . The long snout has a narrowly parabolic shape and large nostrils preceded by small , nipple @-@ shaped flaps of skin . The eyes are circular and of medium size , and are equipped with nictitating membranes . The arched mouth has very short furrows at the corners . There are 30 upper and 28 ? 30 lower tooth rows . The upper teeth are long and triangular with strongly serrated edges , and become increasingly angled towards the sides of the jaw . The lower teeth are slender and upright with finely serrated edges . The five pairs of gill slits are short .

The pectoral fins are distinctively large and triangular , with rounded to pointed tips . The large first dorsal fin originates over the rear of the pectoral fin bases . The second dorsal fin is relatively tall and long , and originates over or slightly behind the anal fin origin . There is no ridge between the dorsal fins . The anal fin is larger than the second dorsal fin . There is a crescent @-@ shaped notch on the caudal peduncle just before the origin of the upper caudal fin lobe . The asymmetrical caudal fin has a well @-@ developed lower lobe and a longer upper lobe with a ventral notch near the tip . The skin is densely covered by overlapping dermal denticles , each bearing three to five horizontal ridges leading to marginal teeth . This species is bronze to brownish gray above and pale below , and lacks an obvious lighter band on the flanks . Rarely , individuals may be light bluish gray above . It may reach 1 @. @ 5 m (4 @. @ 9 ft) in length , though 1 @. @ 0 ? 1 @. @ 3 m (3 @. @ 3 ? 4 @. @ 3 ft) is typical .

= = Distribution and habitat = =

The range of the creek whaler is restricted to northern Australia , between Gladstone in central Queensland and Cape Cuvier in Western Australia . It is a common species that inhabits estuaries and inshore waters from the intertidal zone to a depth of at least 40 m (130 ft) .

= = Biology and ecology = =

The creek whaler feeds predominantly on small teleost fishes (including threadfin breams and lizardfishes) and crustaceans (including penaeid prawns and mantis shrimps) ; cephalopods are also infrequently consumed . Known parasites of this species include the tapeworm *Callitetrarhynchus gracilis* , and a nematode in the genus *Pulchrascaris* .

Like other members of its family , the creek whaler is viviparous , with the developing embryos receiving nourishment from the mother through a placental connection formed from the depleted yolk sac . Females produce litters of one to seven young every year . Mating occurs between May and July , with the females storing the sperm until ovulation takes place between July and September . After a gestation period of seven to 9 months , birthing occurs between February and May of the following year . The newborns measure 35 ? 50 cm (14 ? 20 in) long and spend their first few months of life in shallow , inshore nursery areas such as Cleveland Bay in north Queensland . Males and females attain sexual maturity at lengths of around 83 ? 88 cm (33 ? 35 in) and 90 ? 100 cm (35 ? 39 in) , respectively .

= = Human interactions = =

The creek whaler is a minor bycatch of inshore gillnet fisheries operating in northern Australia ; the meat is sold for human consumption . Given its relatively high reproductive rate , its population appears capable of withstanding present levels of fishing . Therefore , the IUCN has listed this species under Least Concern .