

Size and sex distribution of blacktip sharks in southeast Florida

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The Blacktip Shark (*Carcharhinus limbatus*) is a common species of coastal shark found throughout the United States eastern seaboard from Florida to New York. This species has a well-established migratory pattern and overwinters in Southeast Florida from about January to March. During these months the sharks form large aggregations in the nearshore environment where they are targeted in a shore-based recreational fishery. Since 2014, researchers at Florida Atlantic University have undertaken targeted fishing for blacktips within 200m of the beach in Palm Beach County, Florida. Significantly greater fishing effort was expended during the winter months (January to March) when sharks are in greatest abundance, with only sporadic fishing at other times of the year. From these efforts, a total of 201 blacktip sharks were caught, of which 190 (94.5%) were male and 11 (5.5%) were female. Females ranged from 146 cm to 186 cm, with a mean of 167.6cm. Males ranged from 145 cm to 188 cm TL, with a mean of 171.0 cm. Clasper length and calcification indicated that all males caught were sexually mature. Sharks were captured from 26°24'09.6" latitude to 26°85'41.8" latitude with greater fishing effort north of the Palm Beach Inlet. These data inform us about the size and sex distribution of the blacktip shark aggregations at the southern terminus of their migration. It appears that the males migrate farther south and dominate the sex distribution with females remaining at higher latitudes and only rarely occurring in the large aggregations.