

Chain Dogfish

Scyliorhinus retifer (Garman) 1881



Figure 9A - Chain dogfish (*Scyliorhinus retifer*), male, about 17 inches long, New Jersey. After Bigelow and Schroeder.

Description

The chain-like pattern of narrow black stripes with which the reddish-brown back and sides of this little shark are marked are so distinctive that there is no likelihood of confusing it with any other shark. We need only add that its first dorsal fin stands wholly behind the rear ends of the bases of its pelvic fins; that its second dorsal fin is about one-half as large in area as its first dorsal fin; that its tail fin is square-tipped and occupies only about one-fifth of the length of the fish; and that its teeth are similar in the two jaws, narrow-triangular with a small secondary cusp on either side.

Size

The largest specimen measured so far was 17 inches long.

General range and occurrence in the Gulf of Maine

The range of the chain dogfish is confined to the, 40-125 fathom zone between the offings of Cape Lookout, North Carolina, and of Nantucket. It seems to be the most plentiful off Virginia, in the general offing of Chesapeake Bay, where considerable numbers are taken during the winter trawl fishing. They are caught now and then as far as the offing of Marthas Vineyard, and Cap'n Bill II trawled one, in July 1952, south of Nantucket Lightship, Lat. 40°02' N; Long. 69°37' W, at 75-90 fathoms which brings it within the arbitrary boundary of the Gulf of Maine.

Fishes of the Gulf of Maine by Bigelow & Schroeder is the seminal work on North Atlantic fishes. It was originally published in 1925 with William Welsh, a Bureau of Fisheries scientist who often accompanied Henry Bigelow on his research cruises. In the late 1920's, Bigelow began a long association with William C. Schroeder, publishing a number of papers and reports on fishes of the North Atlantic, including the first revision of *Fishes of the Gulf of Maine*. This excerpt is from that 1953 edition.

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