

GEORGIA AQUARIUM ANIMAL FACT SHEET

Swellshark

Cephaloscyllium ventriosum

Range/Habitat

- The swellshark occurs from central California to the Gulf of California and southern Mexico. It has also been reported from the coast of central Chile.
- This species is found in warm waters on the continental shelf from the shallows to depths of about 1500 feet (457 m). It most commonly occurs between depths of 16 and 121 feet (5-37 m).
- It typically occupies rocky, algae-covered bottom areas in kelp beds.
- The swellshark is primarily a solitary bottom fish, but can be found in aggregations while resting, sometimes piled on top of one another.

Physical Characteristics

- The swell shark has a stout body and a flat, broad head. The snout is short and the mouth is very large, extending behind the large oval-shaped eyes.
- It has 55 to 60 small teeth in both the upper and lower jaw.
- Its coloration is red-brown or yellow-brown with large dark blotches or saddles and small white or yellow spots.
- The species can reach a maximum size of about 3.3 feet (1 m).

Diet/Feeding

- The swellshark is a nocturnal feeder, spending daylight hours in caves and crevices.
- Its prey includes small fishes and crustaceans.
- It is an ambush feeder that remains motionless on the bottom with its mouth open waiting for prey to wander in.

Conservation Status

- The swellshark is listed as "least concern" in the IUCN Red List.

Additional Information

- The swellshark is often among the by-catch in commercial fishing nets and traps. It is of no commercial interest.
- The species is oviparous, with the female laying brown and black rectangular egg cases that have tendrils to attach to the bottom. The eggs are laid in pairs and hatch in 7.5 to 10 months depending on water temperature. Pups emerge at about 6 inches (15 cm) in length.
- The swell shark gets its name from its ability to swallow large amounts of water, swelling its body to twice its normal size, thereby appearing larger when threatened by a potential predator and making it difficult to be dislodged from its crevice or hole.

Sources

www.fishbase.net

<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/Gallery/Descript/SwellShark/SwellShark.html>