

## The northern river shark *Glyphis* sp. C (Carcharhinidae) discovered in Western Australia

DEAN C. THORBURN & DAVID L. MORGAN

Centre for Fish and Fisheries Research, Murdoch University, South St Murdoch, Western Australia 6150;  
thorburn@murdoch.edu.au, d.morgan@murdoch.edu.au

### Abstract

Seven specimens of *Glyphis* sp. C were collected from macrotidal mangrove systems near the town of Derby in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, which represents the first capture in this state. The five males and two females ranged in length from 906 to 1418 mm TL, weighed between 5150 and 18640 g and had a vertebral count range outside that previously reported for the species, i.e. 140–151 cf 147–148. The unusually high incidence of fused vertebrae and spinal deformation may suggest a small gene pool in this population. Previous occurrences of this species were restricted to rivers in the Northern Territory (Australia) and Papua New Guinea. The presence of a small eye (mean diameter 0.87% of total length), large dorsal and pectoral fins, and well defined sensory ampullae may be reflective of living in an environment subjected to extreme turbidity and flows.

**Key words:** *Glyphis*, Carcharhinidae, Kimberley, northern river shark

### Introduction

The northern river shark *Glyphis* sp. C (see Fig. 2) is a cryptic carcharhinid that was previously known from only three specimens from the Fly River in Papua New Guinea and five specimens from the Adelaide and East Alligator rivers in the Northern Territory of Australia (Taniuchi *et al.* 1991; Compagno & Niem 1998; Larson 2000). Only two species of *Glyphis* have been recorded in Australian river systems, these being *Glyphis* sp. A and C, however, the number of congeners that exist worldwide is uncertain, with a lack of specimens hindering the formal description of three of the four or five species within the genus, i.e. *Glyphis* sp. A, *Glyphis* sp. B and *Glyphis* sp. C. The genus is distinguished by a second dorsal fin height between one half and three fifths that of the first (Last & Stevens 1994), and the possession of non-crescentic, longitudinal precaudal pits (Compagno & Niem 1998). *Glyphis* sp. C is differentiated from *Glyphis* sp. A and B by a lower vertebral