



Rediscovery and description of the quagga shark, *Halaelurus quagga* (Alcock, 1899) (Chondrichthyes: Scyliorhinidae) from the southwest coast of India

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Abstract

The Quagga shark *Halaelurus quagga* (Alcock, 1899) is one of the poorest known scyliorhinid (Carcharhiniformes) sharks of the world, described from a single specimen collected from the Arabian Sea coast of India (off Malabar). Since its description, the only other published reports of this species are of specimens from Somalia. This paper reports on *H. quagga* from Indian waters, more than 100 years after its description, and only the third report of specimens of this species globally. A re-description of *H. quagga* is also provided based on the recent Indian specimens.

Key words: Rediscovery, *Halaelurus quagga*, Scyliorhinidae, Carcharhiniformes, Arabian Sea, India

Introduction

Indian waters support a diverse chondrichthyan fauna consisting of more than 150 known species (Raje *et al.*, 2007; Akhilesh *et al.*, in prep.), with the actual number probably being higher since there are no recent, exclusive studies on this group from the region. Of the reported shark species, some have a geographic distribution range restricted to the western Indian Ocean (Compagno *et al.*, 2005).

The Scyliorhinidae (Carcharhiniformes) is one of the largest and diverse shark families with 17 genera, 146 recognized and described species, and at least 19 recognized but undescribed species to date (Human & D.A. Ebert, unpub. data), which is continually expanding with several species being described since 2005 (Last *et al.*, 2008; Froese & Pauly, 2010). The Scyliorhinidae consist of very small sharks that have no commercial importance and very rarely occur as bycatch in shark fisheries of India.

Ten scyliorhinid shark species are reported from the Arabian Sea, of which two belong to the genus *Halaelurus*: *H. boesemani*, and *H. quagga* (Manilo & Bogorodsky, 2003; Human, in prep.). Compagno *et al.* (2005) recognised that the occurrence of *H. natalensis* needed confirmation; however previous reports of *H. natalensis* from the Arabian Sea are erroneous (Human, in prep.).

After the original description of *H. quagga* from the Arabian Sea coast of India (off Malabar), the only other reports of *H. quagga* came from off Somalia (Springer & D'Aubrey, 1972; Springer, 1979). The holotype is the only previously known specimen from India and this article presents the second report of *H. quagga* from Indian waters, over 100 years after its description. This is also the first report of a female and egg case for the species, and provides a re-description based on recent specimens collected from the southwest coast of India (Kerala coast), which are deposited at the Marine Biodiversity Museum at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Cochin, Kerala.