



Description of a new species of catshark, *Atelomycterus marnkalha* n. sp. (Carcharhiniformes: Scyliorhinidae) from north-east Australia

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Abstract

A new atelomycterine catshark species (Scyliorhinidae: Atelomycterinae), *Atelomycterus marnkalha* n. sp., is described from north-east Australia (Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, Torres Strait and Gulf of Carpentaria). It differs from *A. baliensis*, *A. marmoratus* and *A. macleayi* in having posteroventally sloping dorsal fins, a lower precaudal vertebrae count and smaller adult size. Most similar to the Western Australian catshark species *A. fasciatus*, *A. marnkalha* differs from this species in having a larger anal fin, lateral denticles with prominent shallow depressions, claspers of adult males with a cover rhipidion lacking an obvious notch and its colour pattern with prominent white spots and fewer, smaller black spots.

Key words: Carcharhiniformes, Scyliorhinidae, *Atelomycterus marnkalha*, catshark, Great Barrier Reef, Torres Strait

Introduction

The genus *Atelomycterus* was originally proposed by Garman (1913) for the scyliorhinid species *Scyllium marmoratum* Bennett 1830 (Compagno & Stevens, 1993). Since its inception, three additional species; *A. macleayi* Whitley, 1939, *A. fasciatus* Compagno & Stevens, 1993 and *A. baliensis* White, Last & Dharmadi, 2005, have all been incorporated into this genus. *Atelomycterus marmoratus* (Bennett, 1830) has the widest recorded geographical range of the four species, and is found throughout the Indo-West Pacific region from India and Pakistan, through to Vietnam, Philippines and New Guinea (Compagno & Stevens, 1993; White *et al.*, 2005). Closely related to *A. marmoratus*, *A. baliensis*, was described from samples obtained through market surveys of eastern Indonesia (Jimbaran Bay, Bali) (White *et al.*, 2005). The remaining two atelomycterine catshark species, *A. macleayi* and *A. fasciatus*, are Australian endemics. *Atelomycterus macleayi* was first described by Whitley (1939) from Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. In comparison, *A. fasciatus* is a common benthic elasmobranch found on the offshore continental shelf of north-western Australia (Last & Stevens, 1994). Single *A. fasciatus* specimens of a different colour morph were also recorded from the Arafura Sea, the Gulf of Carpentaria and the Torres Strait (Compagno & Stevens, 1993; Last & Stevens, 1994).

A recent benthic biodiversity survey conducted in the Great Barrier Marine Park and Torres Strait region produced a number of benthic elasmobranch samples including several catshark specimens; primarily the alternate *A. fasciatus* colour morph. This enabled a taxonomic comparison to be conducted between *A. fasciatus* specimens collected from north-east Australian waters and Western Australian specimens used in the original description (Compagno & Stevens 1993). This paper provides a description of a third atelomycterine species endemic to Australian waters, and a fifth species for the genus *Atelomycterus*.