



Validating the occurrence of Caribbean reef sharks, *Carcharhinus perezii* (Poey), (Chondrichthyes: Carcharhiniformes) in the northern Gulf of Mexico, with a key for sharks of the family Carcharhinidae inhabiting the region

WILLIAM B. DRIGGERS III^{1,4}, ERIC R. HOFFMAYER¹, EMMA L. HICKERSON²,
TIMOTHY L. MARTIN³ & CHRISTOPHER T. GLEDHILL¹

¹National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Mississippi Laboratories, P.O. Drawer 1207, Pascagoula, MS 39567, USA

²National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Flower Gardens Banks National Marine Sanctuary, 4700 Avenue U, Building 216, Galveston, TX 77551, USA

³National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Marine and Aviation Operations, NOAA Ship OREGON II, 151 Watts Ave., Pascagoula, MS 39567, USA

⁴Corresponding author. E-mail: William.Driggers@noaa.gov

Among the sharks inhabiting the continental shelf waters of the western North Atlantic Ocean, those within the genus *Carcharhinus* are the most speciose (Castro 2011). Authoritative sources agree on the presence of twelve species of carcharhinids in the northern Gulf of Mexico; however, they disagree on the presence of a thirteenth species, *C. perezii* (Poey), in the region (Compagno 1984, Compagno 2002, McEachran & Fechhelm 1998, Castro 2011). While the range of *C. perezii* is well-documented to extend from the southeastern coast of Florida and the Bahamas to Brazil (Castro 2011), published records of *C. perezii* occurring in the northern Gulf of Mexico are limited to two sources. In their description of *Eulamia springeri*, a junior synonym of *C. perezii*, Bigelow & Schroeder (1944) place the species in the northern Gulf of Mexico based on “a somewhat shrivelled skin with head” from a specimen collected off the west coast of Florida that was reported by the authors to be “probably of this species.” Later, Springer (1960) reported the capture of a single specimen off the Mississippi River Delta in 1947; however, no detail of the capture was provided other than it being listed within a table summarizing shark species collected during exploratory fishing operations.



FIGURE 1. Caribbean reef shark, *Carcharhinus perezii* (Poey), photographed by the senior author at the Flower Gardens Banks National Marine Sanctuary on 05 September, 2007.