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Lisa M. Jones
National Marine Fisheries Service

Robert L. Shipp
Dauphin Island Sea Lab

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Oculocutaneous Albinism in a Finetooth Shark, *Carcharhinus isodon*, from Mobile Bay, Alabama

LISA M. JONES AND ROBERT L. SHIPP

Albinism has been documented in numerous species of teleosts (Dawson, 1964, 1966, 1971; Dawson and Heal, 1971). However, published accounts of oculocutaneous albino elasmobranchs are relatively rare. Oculocutaneous albinism is a deficiency of the melanocyte system, resulting in a lack of skin pigment and pink eyes. Coad and Gilhen (2002) reviewed the literature and found published reports of 24 cases of albinism in 20 species with only eight of those being oculocutaneous albinos, 12 being piebaldistic (partial albinos), and 4 not clearly defined. Coloration in piebaldistic specimens includes partially white dorsal or ventral surfaces, lack of diagnostic markings (such as ocellae), or leucistic (yellow) coloration.

Families for which oculocutaneous albinos have been reported include Carcharhinidae, Ginglymostomidae, Triakidae, Sphyrnidae, Torpenididae, and Myliobatidae (Gopalan, 1971; Talent, 1973; Ben Brahmin et al., 1998; Rider et al., 2002). However, no published records exist for oculocutaneous albinos from the Genus *Carcharhinus*, prior to this report.

On July 18, 2003, an oculocutaneous albino finetooth shark, *Carcharhinus isodon*, was collected in Navy Cove at the tip of Fort Morgan (southeast Mobile Bay, Alabama; approximately 28°32'N, 88°02'W) by John Rowlett, of Thomasville, Alabama, and entered in the Alabama Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo at Dauphin Island, Alabama. The shark was later donated to the University of South Alabama, Department of Marine Science for study. Initial species identification was made by the first author and then independently confirmed by four biologists experienced in shark identification.

The normal coloration for *C. isodon* is gray dorsally and lighter gray to white ventrally

(Compagno, 1984). The Mobile Bay specimen was a male young-of-the-year with a visible umbilical scar and a total length of 666 mm, fork length of 549 mm, and weight of 1.6 kg. The overall coloration was white with a pinkish hue and numerous veins, arteries and musculature were visible through the skin (Fig. 1). Eyes in the fresh and frozen specimen are pink (Fig. 2). Diagnostic features were compared to those listed in Compagno (1984). The specimen lacked an interdorsal ridge, upper and lower teeth were unserrated, the third gill slit is very long, and dorsal fin placement was characteristic of the species.

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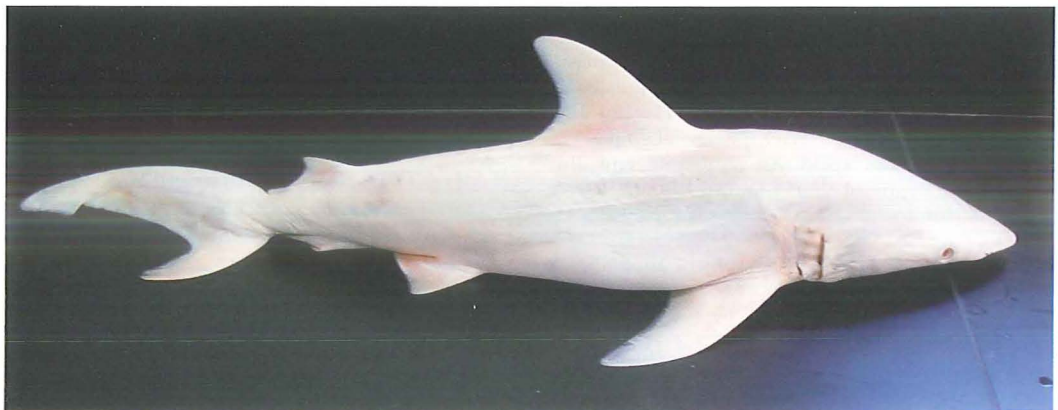


Fig. 1. An oculocutaneous albino finetooth shark from Mobile Bay, Alabama.

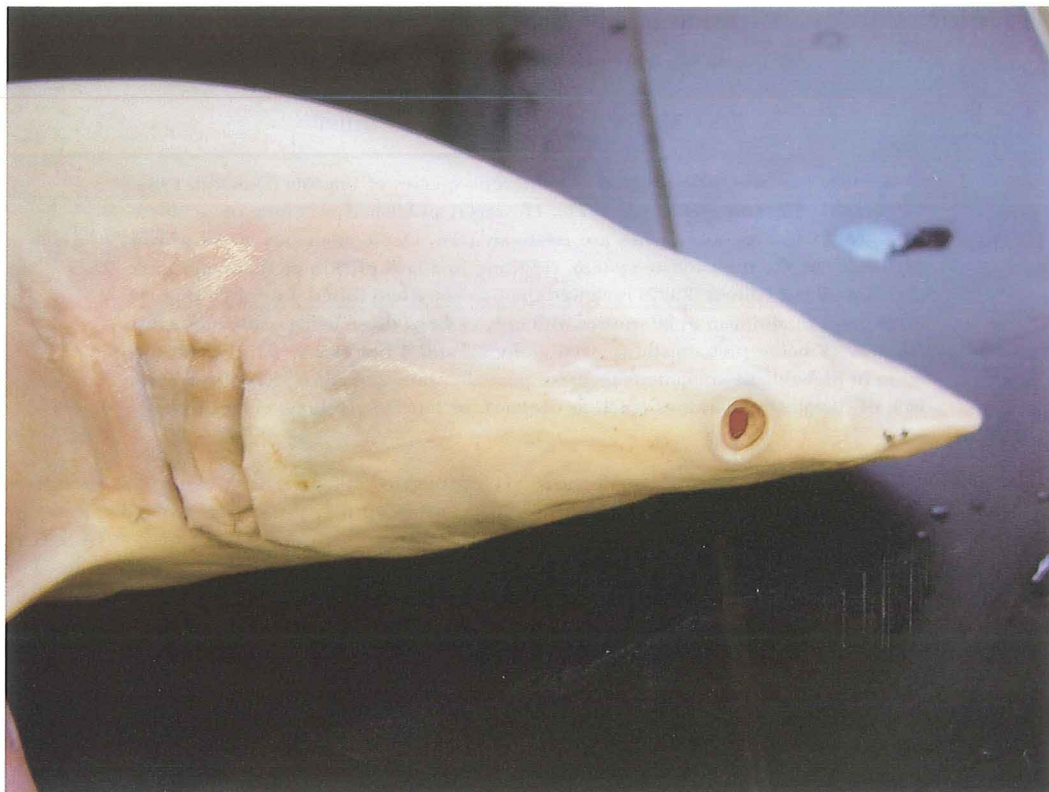


Fig. 2. Pink eyes of oculocutaneous albino finetooth shark from Mobile Bay, Alabama.

Sea Fishing Rodeo for continuing sampling opportunities. The specimen described herein is archived in the Ichthyology Collection at the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville, FL (UF 147491).

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- (LMJ) NOAA-NMFS, SOUTHEAST FISHERIES SCIENCE CENTER, PASCAGOULA LABORATORY, PASCAGOULA, MISSISSIPPI 39567; AND (RLS) UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA, MOBILE, ALABAMA 36688. Date accepted: April 21, 2006.