

ALBINISM IN THE PIGEYE WHALER SHARK *CARCHARHINUS AMBOINENSIS*
(MÜLLER AND HENLE) FROM QUEENSLAND

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An albino, immature female, pigeye whaler shark *Carcharhinus amboinensis* measuring 743 mm in total length was netted with many other normally pigmented sharks at Station Point between Cape Keppel and Seahill on the northern end of Curtis Island, Queensland, February 1987. This appears to be the first known albino individual of this species and the first record of albinism in the family Carcharhinidae.

□ *Sharks, albinism, Carcharhinus amboinensis*

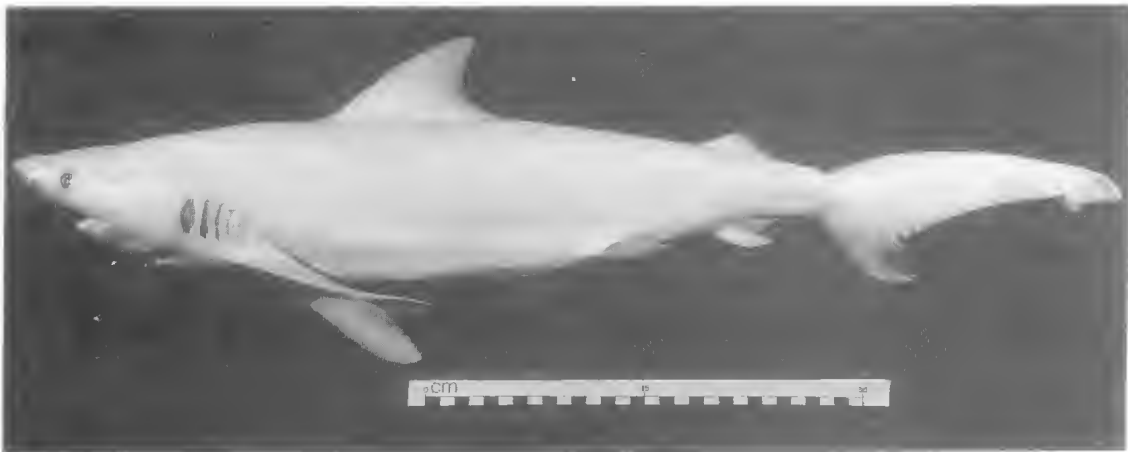
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A pigeye whaler shark *Carcharhinus amboinensis* (Müller and Henle, 1841) netted by Gladstone commercial fisherman Mr Lance Hayward appears to be the first record of albinism in the family Carcharhinidae. The shark was taken in an 8 inch monofilament barramundi net at Station Point, between Cape Keppel and Seahill on the northern end of Curtis Island, Queensland, February 2, 1987. Mr Hayward recognized the shark to be a rarity because it was the first albino individual he and other long-standing Gladstone fisherman had seen or heard of. The specimen was given to the junior author who forwarded it to the Queensland Museum for identification. The specimen (see figure), registered I.22687, is a gutted immature female 743 mm in total length; first dorsal fin height 65 mm; second dorsal fin height 19 mm; length of rear tip of second dorsal

fin 26 mm; internasal distance 50 mm; preoral distance 49 mm; lower teeth 11–2–11; precaudal vertebrae 91. The body and fins are entirely white, with pink irises of the eyes, as in a true albino (Fig. 1). Many other sharks of this species were also netted on the day of capture. They are frequently taken in barramundi *Lates cavifrons* nets.

The pigeye whaler grows to a length of 280 cm and according to Compagno (1984) are born at 71 to 72 cm. The smallest free-living specimen seen by Garrick (1982) measured 710 mm, and specimens from the Fitzroy River and near Seahill, Curtis Island described by Whitley (1943) were free-living at 732 and 804 mm in late March, 1943.

Albinism in elasmobranchs is relatively rare (see Dawson 1964, 1971; Nakaya 1973). Albinism in sharks has been reported for *Notorynchus*



maculatus (Herald, 1953), *Mustelus californicus* (Herald, Schneebeli, Green and Innes, 1960; Cohen, 1973; Talent, 1973), *Sphyrna lewini* (McKenzie, 1970), *Stegastoma fasciatum* (Nakaya, 1973) and *Triakis semifasciata* (Follett, 1976). This is the first record of albinism in the genus *Carcharhinus* and in the family Carcharhinidae *sensu stricto*.

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