



—Staff Photo by Paul Rodgers

*Bill Goldschmitt Shows Off Sand Tiger Shark*

## Rarely Caught In Gulf Of Mexico

# Fisherman Hooks Sand Tiger

By DAN STOBER  
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One shark may be pretty much like the next shark to the man on the street, but not to commercial shark fisherman Bill Goldschmitt.

Thursday morning, three miles out in the Gulf of Mexico, Goldschmitt and his helper tugged on a set line and hauled up a 500-pound prize — a sand tiger shark.

The fisherman was overjoyed. The shark, still kicking with a large steel hook in his mouth, probably was not. At any rate, it didn't last long after that; Goldschmitt shot the shark, a male, through the brain with a shotgun slug.

"I tell you, I'm really pleased," Goldschmitt said after bringing the beast back to Beer Can Island, at the north end of Longboat Key. "Nine years of fishing and

this is my first one of these."

Sand tiger sharks, known in some quarters as ragged tooth sharks, (known properly as *carcharias taurus*), are rarely caught in Gulf waters.

"They are an interesting fish," said Stewart Springer, a shark expert associated with Mote Marine Lab.

Indeed. Sand tigers are cannibalistic before they are even born, engaging in the ultimate sibling rivalry by eating their brothers and sisters.

They are also the only shark known to catch fast-moving game fish and are reputed to gather in groups for cooperative fishing.

While most sharks give birth to dozens of live offspring, the sand tiger gives birth to only two — one from each ovary duct. Inside the duct, it's strictly survival of

the fittest, with the strongest or the first-born eating the rest.

Despite fierce-looking inch-long teeth that curve in hook fashion toward the back of the shark's throat the sand tiger is not considered a threat to man. They generally feed on fish much smaller than humans and probably would attack only if provoked, Springer said.

Goldschmitt hooked his shark west of New Pass on a 1,000-foot line set with 33 hooks the night before. He bit on a hunk of bonita.

Sand tigers, preferring live fish, are seldom caught on a hook and line. Because of this, says Springer, there may be more of them around than is commonly assumed.

Years ago, he said, fishermen using nets often

caught 30 or 40 sand tigers a day in the Atlantic off the coast of south Florida.

North Carolina commercial fishermen tell stories of watching sand tigers herd together schools of smaller fish before moving in for the meal.

When Goldschmitt split open the belly of his sand tiger, he discovered it had recently swallowed a 40-pound drum fish — whole. Also in the stomach were the remains of a half-dozen catfish and smaller sharks.

Goldschmitt has caught a lots of sharks; he usually gives the jaws away or sells them to gift shops. Not this shark.

"The jaws are all mine," he said happily. The rest of the creature, chopped into pieces, will become crab bait.