

Fish Learning – Is it wrong? (continued)

FISH TALK by Bill Hauser

We certainly do not have much to go on. This is one specimen. A newly hatched juvenile. Less than 6 inches long. It was caught in deep water in the Gulf of Mexico off Louisiana. Only one other similar specimen has been caught. It was nearly 3 times larger and was caught near Peru, 36 years ago. These have not yet been deemed to be the same species but rather, they are closely related. They are called “pocket” sharks because they have small pocket-like sacs located just behind and above their pectoral fins. They belong to a larger group called “cookie-cutter sharks” because the structure of their mouth and teeth allows it to prey on larger organisms by simply snatching a bite of flesh. The bite or scar is neat and nearly round in shape – as if it had been cut out by a cookie cutter.

Folks, this is *real stuff*. How could anyone make this up?

The reality of all this is merely a reflection of my motto: all fish are interesting; some are just more interesting than others (and this may change daily). But there is a much bigger picture here. Fishes, as a group, comprise more number of species of vertebrates than any other group. And, as we see here, the more we explore, the more species we count. What does this mean? Fishes have been able to exploit and evolve into all available habitats in our ecosystem.

Do you have a question for FISH TALK? Contact Bill at karelbill@gci.net.

Bill has published ***Fishes of the Last Frontier***, *Life Histories, Biology, Ecology, and Management of Alaska Fishes* and ***Letters from Alaska***, *The Inside to the Outside*.

Read sample chapters at www.billhauserbooks.com.