

Chinese high fin banded shark (Myxocyprinus asiaticus)

The *high fin banded shark, also known as the **Chinese high fin banded shark* (Myxocyprinus asiaticus), is a unique freshwater fish native to the Yangtze River basin in China. Despite its name, it is not a true shark but rather a member of the *suckerfish family (Catostomidae)*. Here's a detailed description:

Physical Characteristics:

1. *Size*:

- Juveniles are small, but adults can grow quite large, reaching lengths of up to 3–4 feet (90–120 cm) in the wild.
- In captivity, they typically grow to about 1.5–2 feet (45–60 cm).

2. *Body Shape*:

- Juveniles have a tall, triangular dorsal fin that gives them a shark-like appearance, which is why they are often called "shark fish."
- As they mature, their body becomes more elongated and cylindrical, and the dorsal fin becomes less prominent.

3. *Coloration*:

- Juveniles are strikingly patterned with bold black and white or dark brown and cream vertical bands.
- Adults lose their vibrant banding and develop a more uniform dark gray or brown coloration.

4. *Fins*:

- The dorsal fin is tall and sail-like in juveniles but becomes shorter and less pronounced in adults.
- The tail fin is forked, and the pectoral and pelvic fins are relatively small.

Behavior:

1. *Peaceful Nature*:

- High fin banded sharks are generally peaceful and non-aggressive, making them suitable for community tanks with other large, peaceful fish.

- They are social and prefer to be kept in groups, especially when young.

2. *Diet*:

- They are omnivorous and feed on algae, small invertebrates, and detritus in the wild.
- In captivity, they can be fed a varied diet of algae wafers, sinking pellets, vegetables (e.g., zucchini, spinach), and occasional live or frozen foods like bloodworms or brine shrimp.

3. *Activity Level*:

- They are active swimmers, especially during their juvenile stage.
- As they grow older, they become more sedentary and spend more time near the bottom of the tank.

Habitat:

1. *Natural Environment*:

- Found in fast-flowing rivers and streams with rocky substrates and cool, well-oxygenated water.

- They prefer clean, clear water with plenty of hiding spots.

2. *Water Conditions*:

- Temperature: 55–75°F (13–24°C). They thrive in cooler water and are sensitive to high temperatures.
- pH: 6.5–7.5.
- Soft to moderately hard water.

Aquarium Care:

1. *Tank Requirements*:

- Due to their potential size, a large tank is necessary. A minimum of 100 gallons is recommended for juveniles, but adults will require tanks of 200 gallons or more.

- Provide a strong water current and excellent filtration to mimic their natural habitat.
- Include rocks, driftwood, and plants to create hiding spots and reduce stress.

2. *Tank Mates*:

- Compatible with other large, peaceful fish that prefer cooler water, such as goldfish, koi, or other suckerfish.
- Avoid keeping them with aggressive or territorial species.

3. *Lifespan*:

- With proper care, high fin banded sharks can live for 10–15 years or more in captivity.

Conservation:

- The high fin banded shark is considered *vulnerable* in the wild due to habitat destruction, pollution, and overfishing.
- It is listed as a protected species in China, and efforts are being made to conserve its natural habitat.

Unique Features:

- The dramatic transformation in appearance from juvenile to adult makes this species particularly fascinating. Juveniles are often sold in the aquarium trade for their striking looks, but many owners are unprepared for their large adult size and specific care requirements.

The high fin banded shark is a unique and interesting fish, but it requires a dedicated aquarist who can provide the right environment and care, especially as it grows. It is best suited for large, cool-water setups and should not be kept in tropical aquariums.