Order: Orectolobiformes  
Family: Orectolobidae (Wobbegongs)

Etymology: Greek, oryktos= to digger + Greek, lobos= lobe

Taxonomy- 3 genera, 7 species
  o Eucrossorhinus- 1 species  
    *E. dasypogon*- Tasselled wobbegong
  o Orectolobus- 5 species  
    *O. wardi*- Northern wobbegong  
    *O. maculatus*- Spotted wobbegong  
    *O. ornatus*- Ornate wobbegong  
    *O. japonicus*- Japanese wobbegong  
    *O. hutchinsi*- Western wobbegong (named in 2006)
  o Sutorectus - 1 species  
    *S. tentaculatus*- Cobbler wobbegong

General Characteristics
  o Small to large sharks (adults 60 cm-3.7 m) with a depressed body.
  o Color pattern highly developed (“carpet sharks”). Spots, saddles, and/or rings on the dorsal side; well camouflaged.
  o Head is broad and flattened with unique dermal flaps (obscure their outline while lying on the bottom).
  o Spiracles larger than the eyes.
  o Nostrils with long pointed or branched barbells.
  o Nearly terminal and transverse mouth with barbells around it (lure in prey).
  o Teeth strongly differentiated. 3 rows of fang-like teeth at upper symphosis and 2 rows at the lower. Strong medial cusp.
  o 2 spineless equally sized dorsal fins far back on the body. 1st dorsal over or slightly behind pelvic fin insertion.
  o Broad, round aplesodic pectoral fins.
  o Anal fin present.
  o Caudal fin short and weakly heterocercal. Subterminal notch.
  o Ovoviviparous-20 or more pups, ~ 8 inches long at birth.
Diagnostic features

- *Eucrossorhinus dasypogon* (Tasselled wobbegong)- Highly branched dermal lobes, dorsal surface with narrow dark lines on light background. Scattered dots at junction of lines.
- *Orectolobus waldi* (Northern wobbegong)- Barbels not branched. Only 2-3 dermal lobes in front of eyes. Simple color pattern, rounded saddles on back.
- *Orectolobus maculatus* (Spotted wobbegong)- Branched barbels. 6-10 dermal lobes. Color pattern with elaborate spots and saddles.
- *Orectolobus ornatus* (Ornate wobbegong)- A few branches on barbells. ~5 dermal lobes. Back with light areas btwn. dark saddles marked with blotches and spots; saddles with conspicuous black borders.
- *Orectolobus hutchinsi* (Western wobbegong)- Unbranched barbells. 4 dermal lobes. Dark brown corrugated saddles w/o white spots and blotches.
- *Sutorectus tentaculatus* (Cobbler wobbegong)- 4 dermal lobes. Dorsal side covered in large dermal denticles (tubercles) giving a warty appearance.

Habitat/Distribution

- Inshore and offshore bottom habitats from intertidal to 110m.
- Commonly found on rocky coral reefs or a sandy bottom (cryptic coloration).
- Presently endemic to warm-temperate to tropical continental waters of Western Pacific.
- Most diverse in Australia and New Guinea up to Japan.

Biology/Food Habits

- Sluggish, move very little.
- Walk along the bottom using paired fins. Can even climb out of water to move between tidepools.
- Powerful bottom predators with heavy jaws and sharp teeth.
- Feed on bottom fishes, crabs, lobster, octopi, and other bottom organisms.
- Have bitten humans when stepped on.

Commercial Value/Conservation

- Colorful skin is used for leather.
- Food value in Australia and off China, Japan, Malaysia probably elsewhere.
- Regularly kept in public aquaria, have bred in captivity.
- 3 Near Threatened species: Tasselled wobbegong, Spotted wobbegong, & Ornate wobbegong.

Bibliography

