

Ventral view ♀

Dorsal view ♀

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Raja brachyura Lafont, 1871

DISTRIBUTION

Northeast Atlantic from southern Norway to Morocco and the Western Mediterranean Sea. Patchy distribution in the North Sea.¹⁻⁴

COMMON NAMES

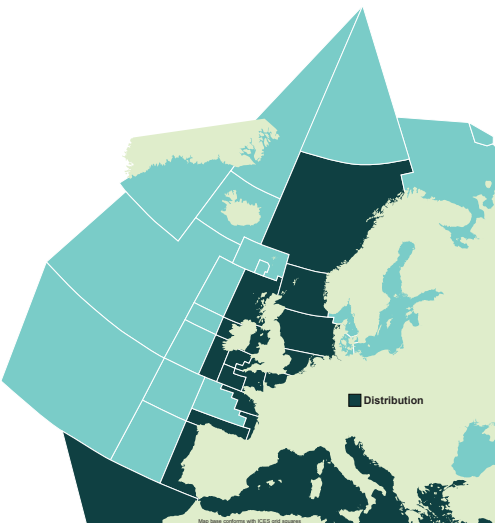
BLONDE RAY, Blonde Skate, Roker, Blondrochen (DEU), Raya Boca de Rosa (ESP), Raie Lisse (FRA), Razza a Coda Corta (ITA), Blonde Rog (NLD), Raia Pontuada (PRT).

IDENTIFICATION AND COLOUR

- 1 Large skate with short snout.^{1,3}
 - 2 Median row of 40–45 thorns on juveniles and adult females.^{1,3}
 - 3 Row of thorns present but interrupted on males.^{1,3}
 - 4 Spots extend to very edge of wings.^{1,3}
 - 5 Larger, paler spots often scattered symmetrically on disc.^{1,3}
- Dorsal surface pale brown to greyish-brown and covered in dark spots.^{1,3}
 - Ventral surface white.^{1,3}

SIZE AND BIOLOGY

- Birth: 16–18cm.
- Mature: 80–90cm.
- Max. TL: 120cm.^{1,3}
- Age at maturity: 5 years. Max. age est.: 15 years.⁵
- Oviparous, eggcases laid between February and August with incubation lasting around seven months.^{1,2,5}
- Primarily feeds on crustaceans, with adults favouring cephalopods and small teleosts.^{1,3}



EGGCASE

- ▶ 33–86mm wide.⁶
- ▶ 82–132mm long (excl. horns).⁶
- ▶ Well defined keels and aprons.^{6,7}
- ▶ Upper horns longer than lower horns. Lower horns strongly curled at the tips.^{6,7}
- ▶ Similar eggcase to the Thornback Ray *Raja clavata*, although significantly larger.



TEETH



- ▶ Both sexes have similar sharp, cusped teeth.¹
- ▶ Upper jaw: 60–90 (c.f. Spotted Ray *Raja montagui*, <60).¹

SIMILAR SPECIES

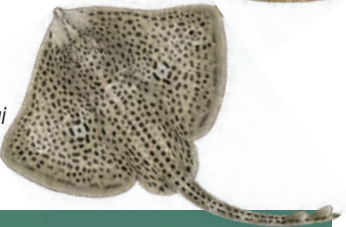
Thornback Ray
Raja clavata



Small-eyed Ray
Raja microocellata



Spotted Ray
Raja montagui



HABITAT

- ▶ Demersal to 900m on continental shelves and upper slopes.¹
- ▶ Most commonly from the shallows to <150m in areas protected from strong tidal currents.^{1,5,8}
- ▶ Prefers soft substrates such as sand, and often found near sandbanks.⁸

CONSERVATION STATUS*

- ▶ IUCN Red List: Global: Near Threatened (2009)
Europe: Near Threatened (2015)
Mediterranean: Near Threatened (2016)
- ▶ A large, late maturing skate that is potentially vulnerable to overexploitation from demersal fisheries. Taken as bycatch and targeted where abundant.^{2,5}

COMMERCIAL IMPORTANCE

- ▶ A commercially valuable species in demersal fisheries. May be targeted in areas of local abundance and caught as bycatch in multispecies fisheries.^{1,2,5}
- ▶ Utilised for human consumption.^{1,2,5}
- ▶ Popular species in recreational fisheries.^{1,2,5}

MANAGEMENT*

- ▶ Subject to prohibitions and regulations under the CFP.

REFERENCES

- 1 Ebert & Stehmann. 2013.
- 2 Ellis *et al.* 2009.
- 3 Last *et al.* 2016.
- 4 McCully *et al.* 2012.
- 5 McCully *et al.* 2015.
- 6 Gordon *et al.* 2016.
- 7 Porcu *et al.* 2017.
- 8 Martin *et al.* 2017.