

## LEGSKATES

## Family Anacanthobatidae

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Legskates are small to medium-sized rays (adults from 29 cm to 75 cm TL) with a strongly flattened, rounded to heart-shaped disc, pectoral fins broadly rounded, and a more or less elongated pointed snout, sometimes with a thin filament or leaf-like appendage at its tip. The tail is short, very slender, lacks dorsal fins, and has a very small to barely detectable caudal fin. Pelvic fins consist of 2 separate lobes; finger-like anterior lobes resemble 'legs' and are often much longer than the posterior lobes. The posterior lobes are connected for their full length to the tail in most females. Like in other skates, the anterior nasal flaps are expanded to form an incomplete nasal curtain. These flaps usually reach the mouth but their posterior margins are not joined like in some other ray groups. Skin loose, fleshy and without denticles, apart from a few thornlets on the tail of juveniles in 1 species. No thorns on the body, except for alar thorns in adult males. The internal and external structures of the adult male clasper differ greatly between species. The family includes 13 species in 5 genera: *Anacanthobatis*, *Indobatis*, *Schroederobatis*, *Sinobatis* and *Springeria*. Some of these species were only recently named and some former subgenera have now been upgraded to genera, based mainly on the structure of their claspers. Legskates live mostly in deepwater on continental and insular slopes, between depths of 150 and 1725 m. They occur in warm temperate and tropical seas, in the Western Central Atlantic, South-West Indian Ocean and Indo–West Pacific, and most species have limited distributions. They are bottom-dwellers, using their 'legs' to walk on the seafloor, but have been also observed from submersibles swimming actively well above the seafloor. Diet consists primarily of benthic invertebrates and small fishes. Surprisingly, relatively large bony fishes have been found in the stomachs of legskates. All species are oviparous. Legskates are rarely encountered as they are caught infrequently in trawls and live well beyond depths accessible to most humans.

## KEY TO ANACANTHOBATID GENERA

The diagnoses of the 5 genera and 13 species of the family Anacanthobatidae are based largely on clasper anatomy (external components and cartilages) so a simple and reliable practical generic key cannot be constructed. Instead, the following geographical based groupings are provided to assist readers identify the species:

Western Central Atlantic (*Schroederobatis americana*, *Springeria folirostris* and *Springeria longirostris*)

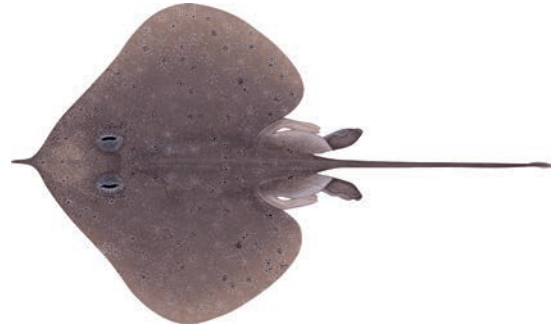
Western Indian Ocean (*Anacanthobatis marmorata*, *Indobatis ori* and *Sinobatis brevicauda*)

Northern Indian Ocean (*Sinobatis andamanensis*)

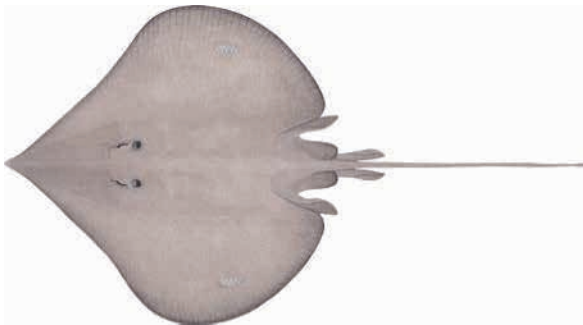
Eastern Indian Ocean (*Sinobatis bulbicauda* and *S. caerulea*)

North-West Pacific (*Sinobatis borneensis*, *S. melanosoma* and *S. stenosoma*)

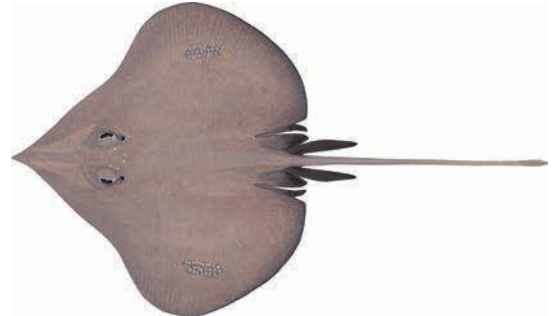
South-West Pacific (*Sinobatis filicauda*)



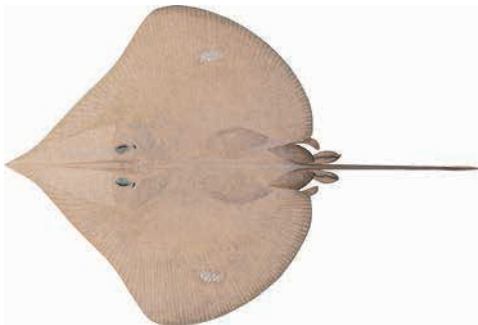
*Anacanthobatis* (1 species, p. 496)



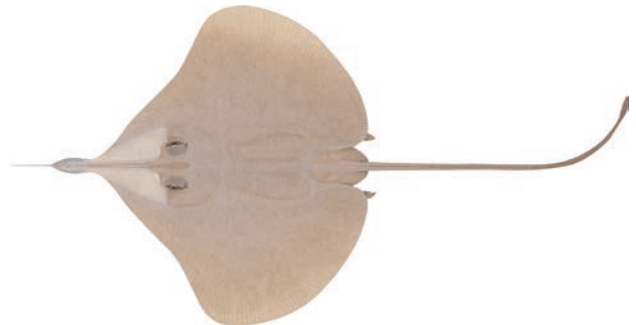
*Indobatis* (1 species, p. 497)



*Schroederobatis* (1 species, p. 498)



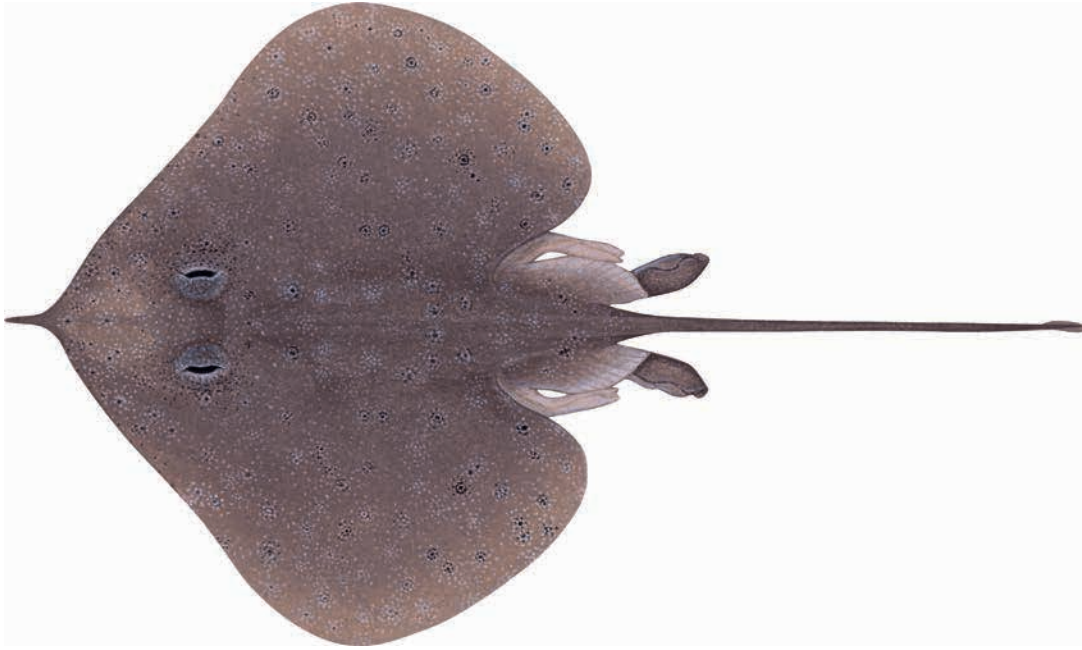
*Sinobatis* (8 species, pp. 499–506)



*Springeria* (2 species, pp. 507–508)

## SPOTTED LEGSKATE

22.1

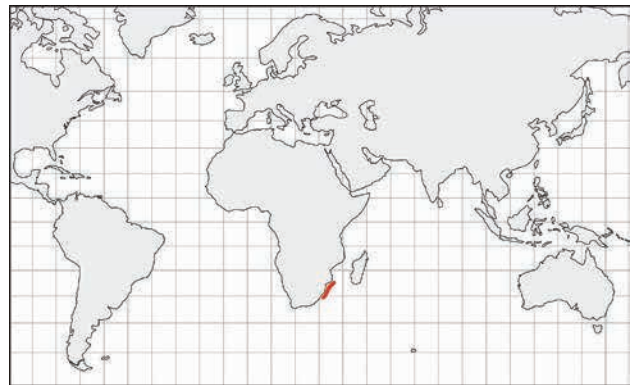
*Anacanthobatis marmorata* (von Bonde & Swart, 1923)

DD

**IDENTIFICATION.** Very small legskate with an extremely depressed, pear-shaped (in females and juvenile males) to broadly heart-shaped (in adult males) disc, dorsal surface mottled, and snout long and narrowly pointed with short, thin filament at its tip. Disc anterior margin almost straight to slightly convex, anteriormost pectoral radials almost reaching snout tip. Ventral head length 26–29% of TL; preoral length 14–19% of TL. Snout length 3.6–4.2 times interorbital distance, 4.6–5.1 times in disc width. Eyes moderately large to large, orbit 2.5–4.4 times in snout length; eyes positioned close to spiracles. Mouth small with 28–35 tooth rows in each jaw. Skin smooth, except for small alar thorn patches in adult male. Tail very slender and cord-like, usually slightly longer than disc length; caudal fin small and narrow. Pectoral fin with 72–79 radials. Claspers short (postcloacal length ~18% of TL) and thick in adult male, without a sharply serrated cartilage.

**COLOUR.** Dorsal surface irregularly mottled light brown and white, with randomly scattered light brown ocelli with pale outer margins; papillae and rostral filament dark brown. Ventral surface uniformly pale.

**SIZE.** Attains at least 29 cm TL. Males and females are mature at ~23 cm TL. Size at hatching unknown.

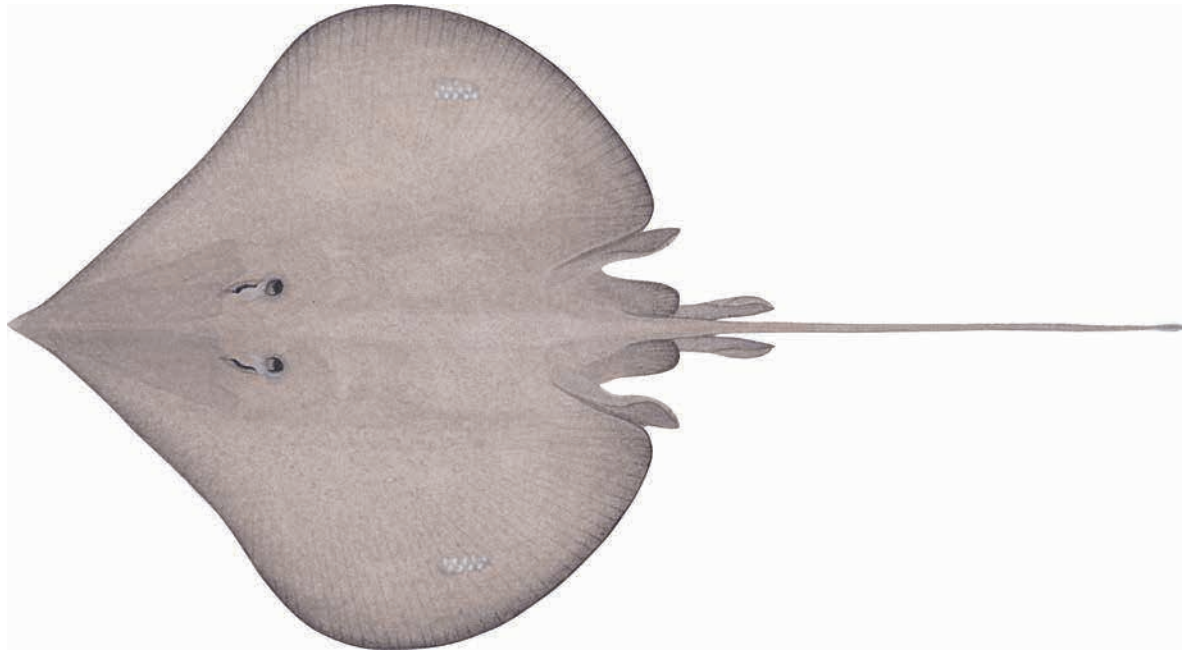


**HABITAT AND BIOLOGY.** South-West Indian Ocean; South Africa to Mozambique. Deepwater, on soft bottoms near continental shelf break and on upper slope at 200–435 m depths. Probably a bottom-dweller, feeding mainly on benthic invertebrates and small fishes. Legskates have been filmed swimming well above the bottom in midwater off Africa.

**SIMILAR SPECIES.** No other legskates are known to have a similar mottling pattern on the upper surface. The structure of cartilages that form the clasper is also unlike any other member of the group.

## BLACK LEGSKATE

22.2

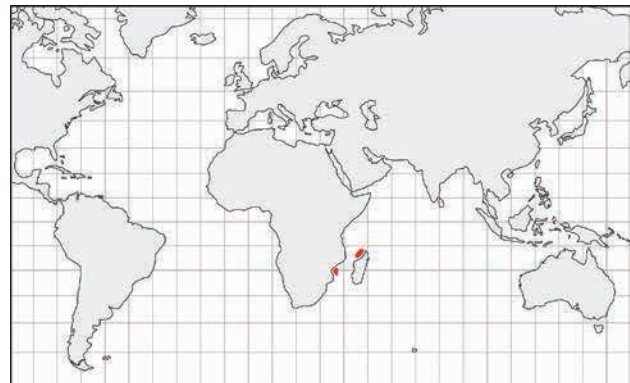
*Indobatis ori* (Wallace, 1967)

DD

**IDENTIFICATION.** Small legskate with an extremely depressed pear-shaped (in females and juvenile males) to broadly heart-shaped (in adult male) disc, and snout long and narrowly pointed with short, thin filament at its tip in juveniles. Disc anterior margins almost straight to slightly convex, anteriormost pectoral radials almost reaching snout tip. Ventral head length 23–27% (in juveniles) to 31–32% (in adults) of TL; preoral length 15–19% (in juveniles) to 21–24% (in adults) of TL. Snout length 3.9–6.9 times interorbital distance, 2.3–3.4 times in disc width. Eyes small, orbit 5–8 times in snout length in juveniles, but ~9–10 times in snout length in adults; eyes close to spiracles. Mouth small with 16–26 tooth rows in each jaw. Skin smooth, except for small alar thorn patches in adult male. Tail very slender and cord-like, its length about equal to disc length in adults, but 1.5–1.8 times disc length in juveniles; caudal fin small and narrow. Pectoral fin with 67–73 radials. Claspers short (postcloacal length ~16% of TL) and slender in adult male, with a sharply serrated cartilage.

**COLOUR.** Dorsal surface dark greyish brown, somewhat paler than ventral surface; interspiracular pores indistinct; posterior and outer parts of ventral surface somewhat darker than anterior part and along mid-body.

**SIZE.** Attains at least 43 cm TL. Maturity and hatching sizes unknown.

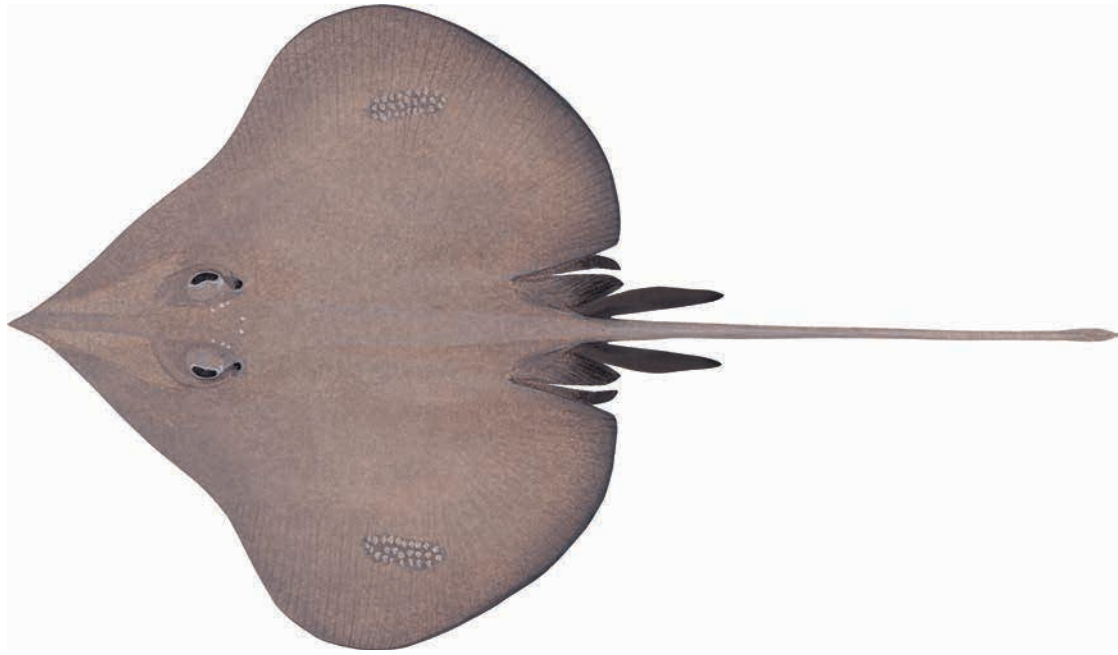


**HABITAT AND BIOLOGY.** South-West Indian Ocean; off Mozambique and Madagascar. Very deep water, over soft bottoms on mid to outer continental slope at 1000–1725 m depths. Probably feeds on bottom-dwelling invertebrates and small fishes.

**SIMILAR SPECIES.** No other similar legskates known in the same general region. The Spotted Legskate (22.1) has a shorter tail and the dorsal surface of the disc is mottled (rather than plain coloured).

## AMERICAN LEGSKATE

22.3

*Schroederobatis americana* (Bigelow & Schroeder, 1962)

DD

**IDENTIFICATION.** Small legskate with an extremely depressed, pear-shaped (in females and juvenile males) to broadly heart-shaped (in adult male) disc, and snout very long, narrowly pointed and ending in short, thin filament. Disc anterior margins almost straight to slightly convex, anteriormost pectoral radials almost reaching snout tip. Ventral head length ~28–29% of TL; preoral length 19–22% of TL. Snout length 6.4–7.9 times interorbital distance, 3–3.4 times in disc width. Eyes moderately large, orbit 3.9–4.8 times in snout length; eyes close to spiracles. Mouth small with 20–26 tooth rows in each jaw. Skin smooth, except for small alar thorn patches in adult male. Tail very slender and cord-like, slightly longer than disc length; caudal fin small and narrow. Pectoral fin with 63–66 radials. Claspers short (postcloacal length ~17% of TL) and slender in adult male, without a shield and sharply serrated cartilage.

**COLOUR.** Dorsal surface largely plain greyish to brownish, terminal filament slightly darker. Ventral surface pale greyish or white anterior to nostrils and around mouth; dark brown mottling between mouth and central disc; rest of disc and pelvic fins dark brown except for broken white and brown markings along anterior pelvic-fin lobes; cloacal opening with white edge; tail brown except for conspicuous white tip and some darker mottling.



**SIZE.** Attains at least 38 cm TL. Males mature at ~30–32 cm TL. Size at hatching ~9 cm TL.

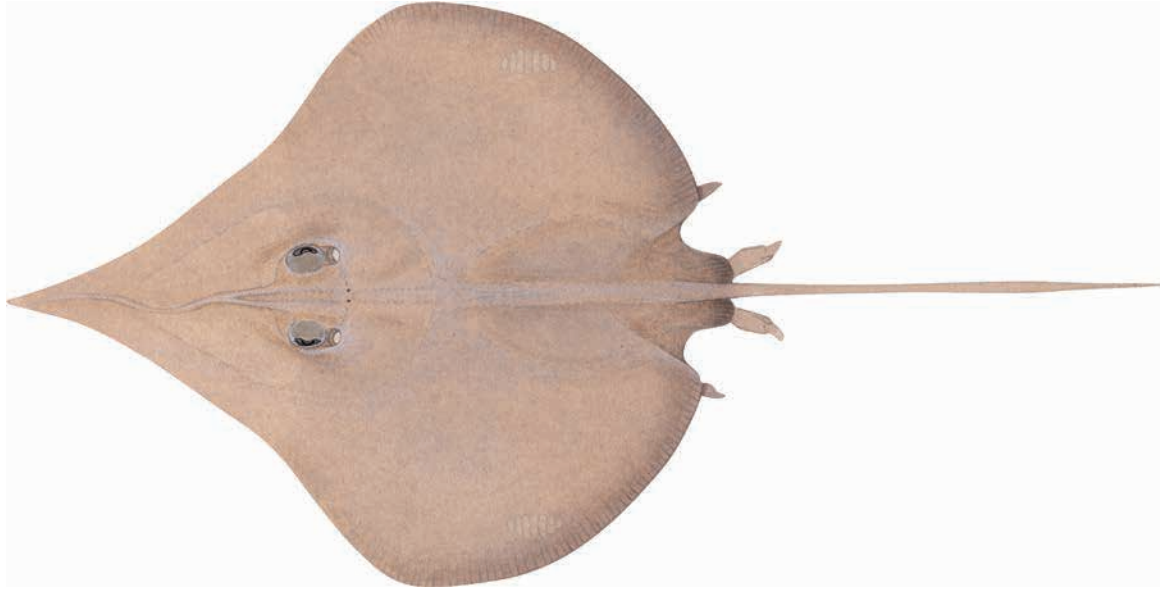
**HABITAT AND BIOLOGY.** Western Central Atlantic; Belize to Suriname. Soft bottoms near continental shelf break and on upper slope at 185–915 m depths. Probably a bottom-dweller, feeding on benthic invertebrates and small fishes.

**SIMILAR SPECIES.** Differs from the Longnose Legskate (22.13), also from the Western Central Atlantic, in dorsal coloration (greyish or brownish rather than purplish), and a smaller maximum size and shorter snout.



## ANDAMAN LEGSKATE

22.4

*Sinobatis andamanensis* Last & Bussarawit, 2016

NE

**IDENTIFICATION.** Small legskate with a weak, heart-shaped disc, very long and proboscis-like snout ending in minute fleshy filament, moderately elongate tail, and dark coloration above and paler ventrally. Disc anterior margins deeply concave forward of eyes in both sexes; anteriormost pectoral radials ending well short of snout tip; ventral head length 36–41% of TL; preoral length 24–32% TL, ratios much larger in adult females. Snout length 7–9.5 times interorbital distance, 1.8–2.5 times in disc width. Eyes medium-sized, snout length 6.6–7.9 times orbit length in males, up to 11 times in females; spiracle large and close to orbit. Mouth small with 25–29 tooth rows. Skin smooth, except for small alar thorn patches in adult male. Tail very slender; not bulbous near its tip; caudal fin small, upper lobe longer than lower lobe. Pectoral fin with 69–73 radials. Claspers short (postcloacal length ~12–15% of TL) and stout in adult males.

**COLOUR.** Dorsal surface brownish to greyish pink (sometimes bluish); whitish along anterior disc margin, hind margin dark brown or blackish; outer posterior lobe of pelvic fin and alar region dark brown; clasper and anterior lobe of pelvic fin white. Undersurface uniformly whitish to translucent.



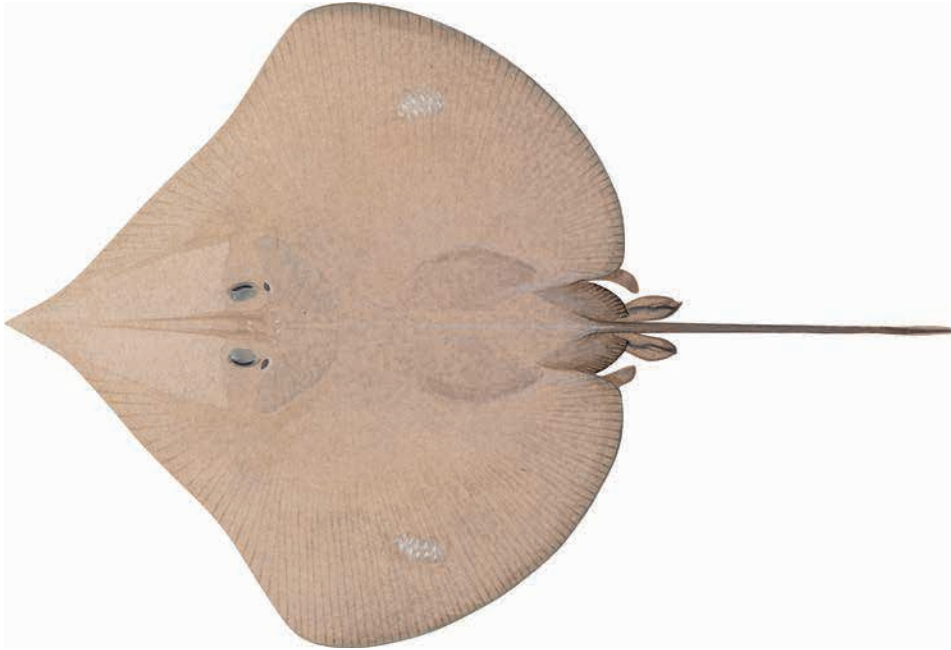
**SIZE.** Attains at least 34 cm TL. Males mature from ~33 cm TL; hatching size unknown.

**HABITAT AND BIOLOGY.** Northern Indian Ocean; known from off Myanmar, but probably more widely distributed in Bay of Bengal. Little known, probably benthic on soft bottoms of continental slope.

**SIMILAR SPECIES.** Resembles the West Australian Legskate (22.7) in body shape, but has a relatively longer snout (length 7–9.5 *vs.* 4–6.6 times interorbital distance), and lacks a bulbous expansion on the posterior part of the tail.

## BORNEO LEGSKATE

22.5

*Sinobatis borneensis* (Chan, 1965)

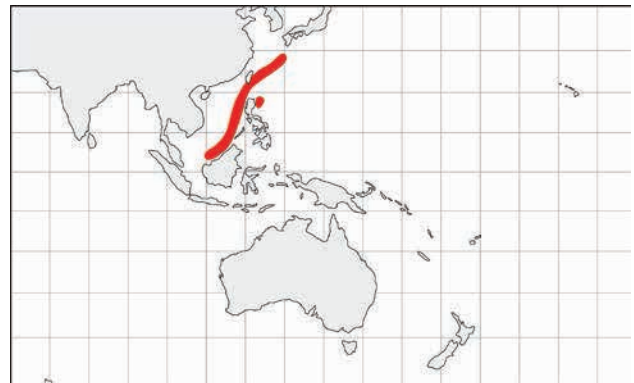
LC

**IDENTIFICATION.** Small legskate with a pronounced heart-shaped disc, snout long and narrowly pointed, short and thin filament at snout tip, anterior margins of disc with conspicuous concavities at levels of snout and eyes, and anteriormost pectoral radials almost reaching snout tip. Disc more strongly heart-shaped in adult males than females and juveniles; ventral head length ~38% of TL; preoral length ~25% TL. Snout length ~6.5 times interorbital distance, ~2.9 times in disc width. Eyes small, orbit ~6.3 times in snout length and remote from its tip; close to spiracles. Mouth small with 25–26 tooth rows. Skin smooth, except for small alar thorn patches in adult male. Tail short and very slender; not bulbous near its tip; caudal fin small and narrow. Pectoral fin with 70–76 radials. Claspers long and slender in adult males.

**COLOUR.** Dorsal surface whitish to pale greyish, often paler than the ventral surface; interspiracular pores indistinct; posterior part of ventral surface brownish and darker than anterior part.

**SIZE.** Attains 35 cm TL. Males mature at ~25 cm TL; hatching size unknown.

**HABITAT AND BIOLOGY.** North-West Pacific; Malaysian Borneo to northern China, including Philippines and

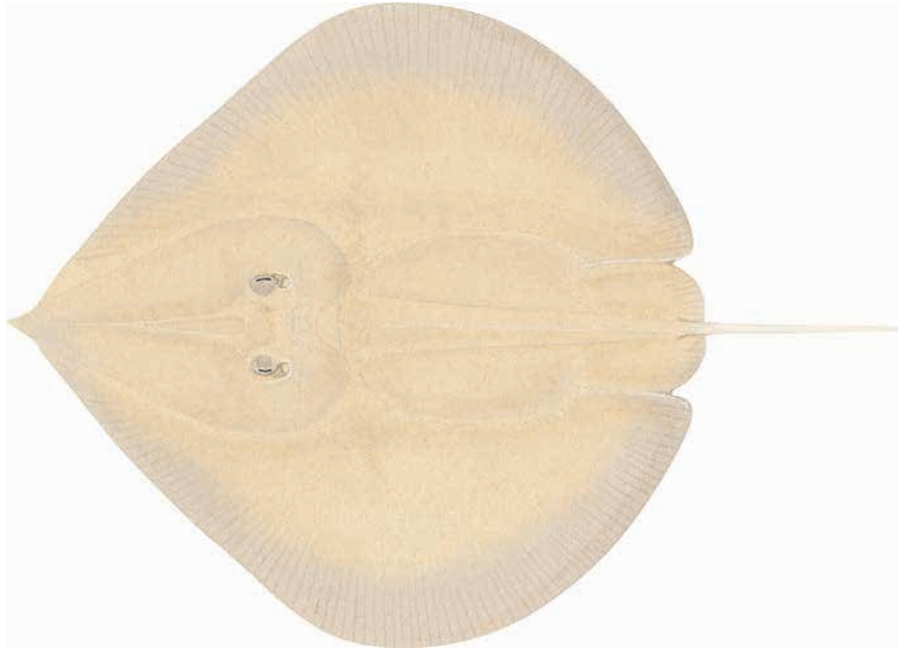


Taiwan. Soft bottoms of upper continental slope at 315–990 m depths. Feeds on benthic invertebrates and small fishes. A rather large teleost has been found in the stomach of the adult male holotype.

**SIMILAR SPECIES.** Has been confused with the Blackbody Legskate (22.10), which occurs in the same general region. However, the Blackbody Legskate has dark brown dorsal and ventral disc surfaces (*vs.* typically pale), and reaches a larger maximum size (~60 cm TL).

## SHORTTAIL LEGSKATE

22.6

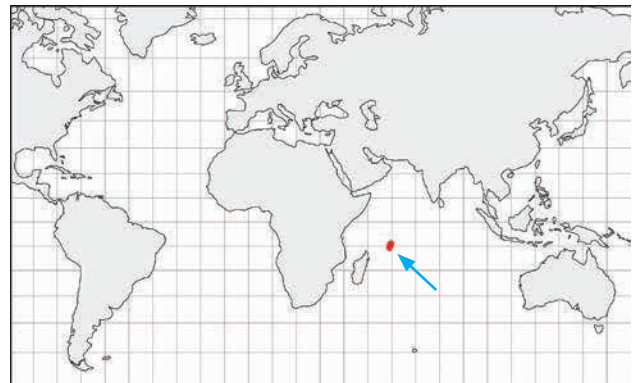
*Sinobatis brevicauda* Weigmann & Stehmann, 2016

NE

**IDENTIFICATION.** Medium-sized legskate with an extremely depressed and very broad, pear-shaped disc, snout very long and narrowly pointed, and short, thin filament at snout tip. Disc anterior margins slightly convex, anterior-most pectoral radials almost reaching snout tip. Ventral head length ~41% of TL; preoral length ~30% of TL. Snout length ~6.6–6.7 times interorbital distance, ~2.5–2.6 times in disc width. Eyes small, orbit ~7.9–8.1 times in snout length; eyes close to spiracles. Mouth small with 25–27 tooth rows in each jaw. Skin smooth, probably apart from small alar thorn patches in adult male. Tail very short and slender, slightly depressed anteriorly, its length less than half of disc length and ~35–36% of TL; caudal fin rudimentary. Pectoral fin with 71–72 radials.

**COLOUR.** Dorsal surface pale greyish brown, ventral surface anteriorly white to level of lower jaw and between gills, posterior part of disc and underside of tail pale greyish brown with blotches at transition from white to brown; underside of posterior pelvic lobe medium greyish brown, anterior lobes dark brown with an indistinct white blotch near the tip and a distinct white blotch at origin; interspiracular pores indistinct.

**SIZE.** Attains at least 59 cm TL. Known from only 2 female specimens.



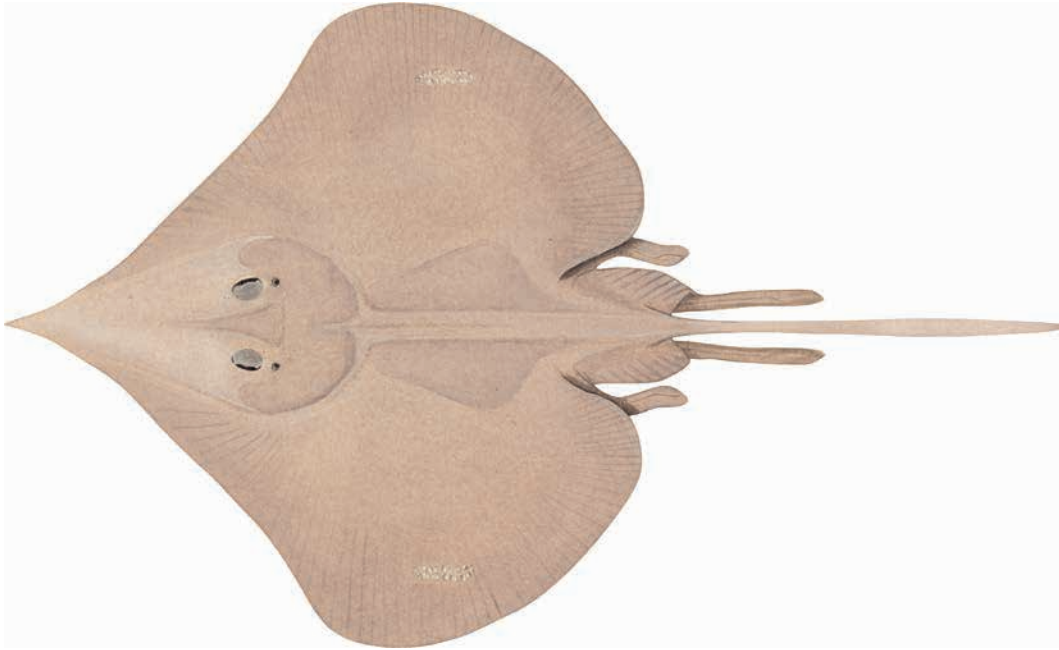
**HABITAT AND BIOLOGY.** Central Indian Ocean; Saya de Malha Bank, likely to be more widespread. Deep insular slopes at 960–1130 m depths. Probably feeds on benthic invertebrates and small fishes. A rather large teleost was found in the stomach of the female paratype.

**SIMILAR SPECIES.** No similar legskates are known from the same geographic region. Resembles the West Australian Legskate (22.7), a relative from the Eastern Indian Ocean, but has a longer snout and head, and a shorter and less bulbous tail.



## WEST AUSTRALIAN LEGSKATE

22.7

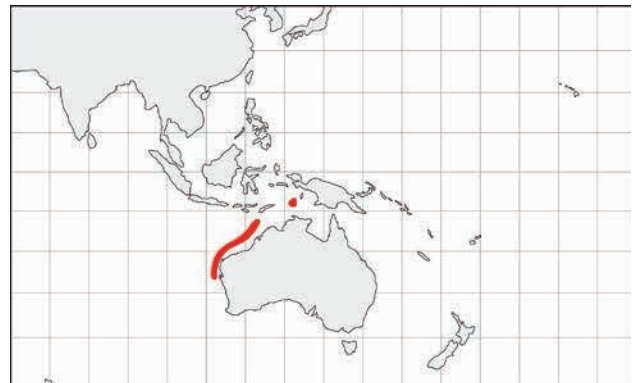
*Sinobatis bulbicauda* Last & Séret, 2008

LC

**IDENTIFICATION.** Medium-sized legskate with an enlarged, pearl-shaped to heart-shaped disc, snout long and ending in short triangular lobe, tail short with flattened lobe near its tip and ending in thin filament, and caudal fin minute and barely detectable. Disc strongly heart-shaped with concave anterior margins in adult males, more pear-shaped in females and juveniles with straight margins; anteriormost pectoral radials almost reaching snout tip. Ventral head length 23–36% of TL, preoral length 16–28% TL, ratios higher in adults than young. Snout narrowest in adult males, length 4–6.6 times interorbital distance. Eyes medium-sized, orbit 4.7–8.8 times in snout length; spiracles very small, positioned well behind eyes. Mouth small with 21–26 tooth rows in upper jaw. Skin smooth, except for small alar thorn patches in adult male. Tail very slender anteriorly, broadened near its tip; caudal fin rudimentary. Pectoral fin with 66–71 radials. Claspers long (postcloacal length ~17–21% of TL) and slender in adult males.

**COLOUR.** Dorsal surface pale brown to greyish brown, paler yellowish on snout beside rostral cartilage; eyes dark. Undersurface translucent white.

**SIZE.** Attains 56 cm TL. Males mature at ~43 cm TL; smallest neonatal juvenile 13 cm TL.

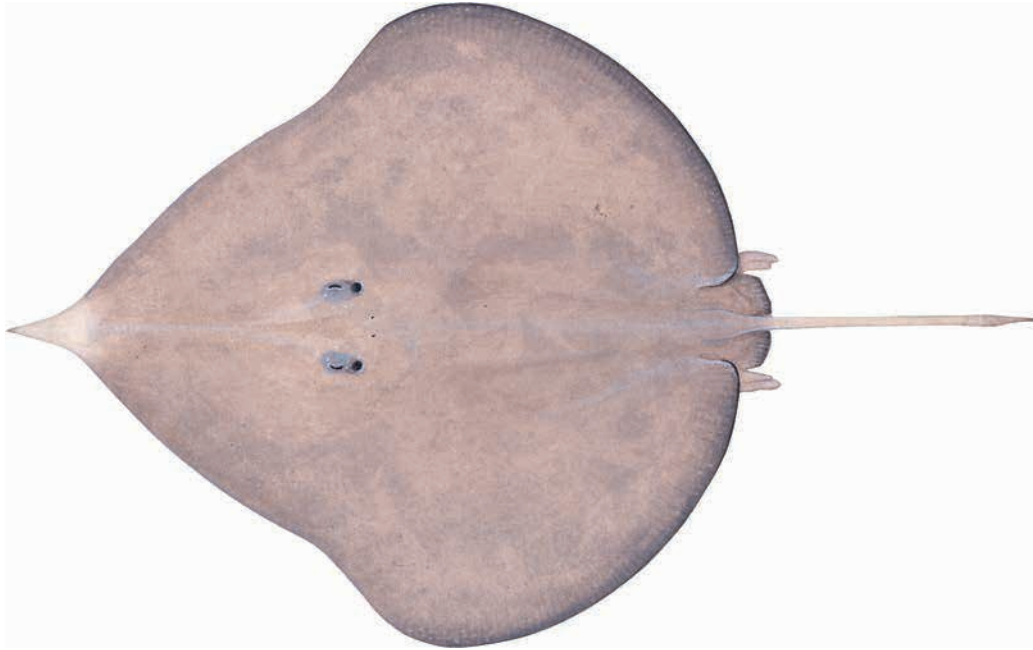


**HABITAT AND BIOLOGY.** Eastern Indian Ocean; Australia (Shark Bay) to eastern Indonesia. Outer continental shelf and upper slope in depths of 150–1125 m. Life history unknown, probably feeds on small fishes and invertebrates.

**SIMILAR SPECIES.** Occurs in the same general region as the larger Indigo Legskate (22.8), but usually occurs on shallower parts of the continental slope off Western Australia. The West Australian Legskate differs from its relative in colour (largely brownish rather than bluish) and has a distinctive bulb-like process near the tail tip (otherwise missing).

## INDIGO LEGSKATE

22.8

*Sinobatis caerulea* Last & Séret, 2008

DD

**IDENTIFICATION.** Medium-sized bluish legskate with a greatly enlarged, heart-shaped disc, snout very long and ending in prominent narrow triangular lobe, tail very short and lacking flattened lobe near its tip, and caudal fin minute and barely detectable. Disc with double concave anterior margins; anteriormost pectoral radials just short of snout tip. Ventral head length 38–42% of TL, preoral length 28–32% TL, ratios higher in females than males. Snout length 5.7–6.7 times interorbital distance. Eyes small, partly concealed beneath skin, orbit 11–16 times in snout length; spiracles very small, positioned well behind eyes. Mouth small with 24–29 tooth rows in upper jaw. Skin smooth, except possibly for small alar thorn patches in adult male. Tail very slender throughout; caudal fin rudimentary. Pectoral fin with 72–76 radials. Clasper shape of adult males unknown.

**COLOUR.** Dorsal surface bluish to dark bluish grey, not obviously paler on snout beside rostral cartilage; rostral lobe noticeably paler than snout, with a black tip; eyes dark. Undersurface bluish, similar to upper surface; rostral lobe, area around mouth, and tail white.

**SIZE.** Attains at least 68 cm TL. Male specimen still immature at 54 cm TL; hatching size unknown.

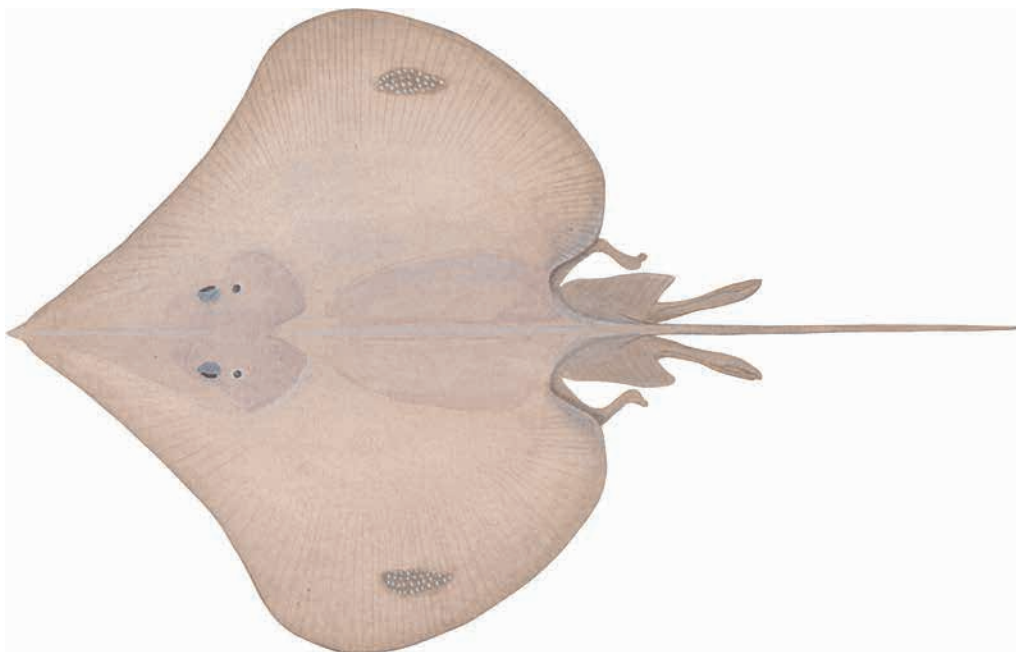


**HABITAT AND BIOLOGY.** Eastern Indian Ocean; off Western Australia, also unconfirmed reports off Indonesia. Upper continental slope at depths of 480–1170 m. Uncommon and life history unknown, but probably feeds on invertebrates and bony fishes.

**SIMILAR SPECIES.** One of the largest legskates, it differs from the West Australian Legskate (22.7), in having a bluish coloration on both surfaces (rather than being brownish on the dorsal surface and white below). The smaller Andaman Legskate (22.4) may also have a bluish grey dorsal surface but its undersurface is whitish (rather than bluish).

## EAST AUSTRALIAN LEGSKATE

22.9

*Sinobatis filicauda* Last & Séret, 2008

DD

**IDENTIFICATION.** Medium-sized legskate with an enlarged, pear-shaped to heart-shaped disc, snout moderately elongate ending in very short triangular lobe, tail short and lacking flattened lobe near its tip, and caudal fin minute and barely detectable. Disc strongly heart-shaped with deep concave anterior margins in adult males, broadly pear-shaped in females and juveniles with straight to weakly concave margins; anteriormost pectoral radials almost reaching snout tip. Ventral head length 32–34% of TL, preoral length 23–26% TL, ratios for adults and young similar. Snout narrower in adult males than females, length 4.1–5.1 times interorbital distance. Eyes medium-sized, orbit 7.1–9.6 times in snout length; spiracles very small, positioned well behind eyes. Mouth small with 18–22 tooth rows in upper jaw. Skin smooth, except for small alar thorn patches in adult male. Tail very slender over its entire length, not thickened; caudal fin rudimentary. Pectoral fin with 71–75 radials. Claspers rather long (postcloacal length ~18% of TL) and moderately robust in adult males.

**COLOUR.** Dorsal surface pale brownish, darker bluish grey over gills and abdomen; alar patches demarcated by dark blotches; eyes bluish black. Undersurface translucent to bluish white, some dark areas around posterior half of disc.



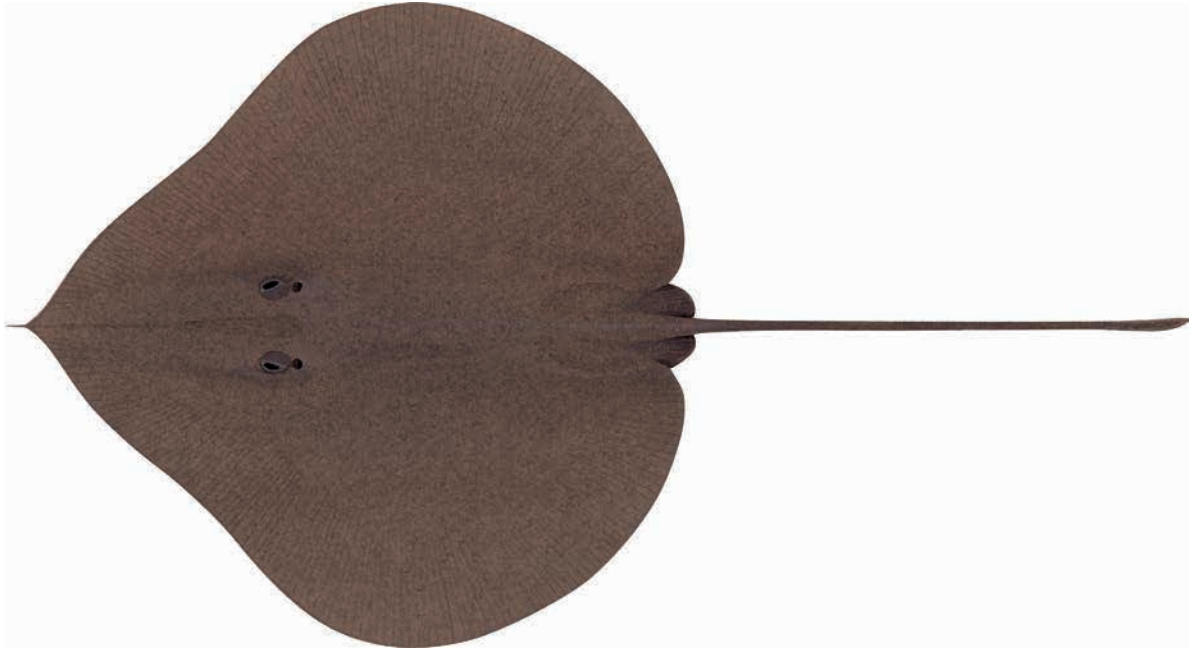
**SIZE.** Attains at least 55 cm TL (an adult male); hatching size unknown.

**HABITAT AND BIOLOGY.** South-West Pacific; Queensland (Australia), possibly more widespread in Northern Coral Sea. Upper continental slope in 605–880 m depth. Reasonably common but life history unknown.

**SIMILAR SPECIES.** Resembles the West Australian Legskate (22.7) from the Eastern Indian Ocean in disc shape, but lacks a bulbous process near the tail tip characterising that legskate.

## BLACKBODY LEGSKATE

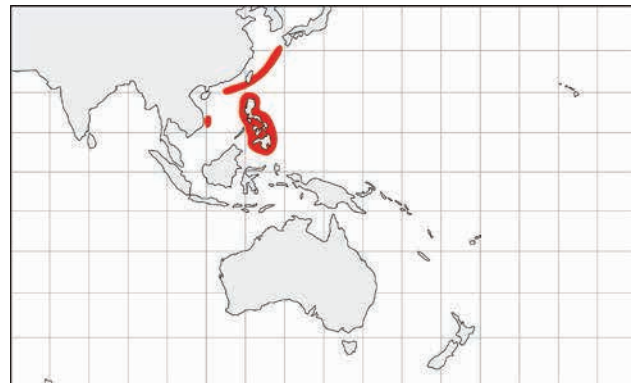
22.10

*Sinobatis melanosoma* (Chan, 1965)

LC

**IDENTIFICATION.** Medium-sized legskate with an extremely depressed pear-shaped (in females and juvenile males) to broadly heart-shaped (in adult male) disc, snout long and narrowly pointed, and short and thin filament at snout tip. Disc anterior margins almost straight to slightly convex, anteriormost pectoral radials almost reaching snout tip. Ventral head length ~26–30% of TL; preoral length ~15–21% of TL. Snout length ~2.9–5.2 times interorbital distance, ~2.9–3.7 times in disc width. Eyes small, orbit ~4.2–6.4 times in snout length; eyes close to spiracles. Mouth small with 23–29 tooth rows in each jaw. Skin smooth, except for small alar thorn patches in adult male, and median row of 6 minute thorn-like denticles on tail in small juvenile. Tail very slender and cord-like, slightly shorter than disc length in large specimens, but ~1.8 times disc length in juveniles; caudal fin well developed. Pectoral fin with 69–75 radials. Claspers short (postcloacal length ~18% of TL) and slender in adult male, without a sharply serrated cartilage.

**COLOUR.** Disc dorsally and ventrally blackish brown with black areas around the spiracles and orbits; area around mouth and anterior pelvic lobes pale; tail brownish dorsally, pale ventrally.



**SIZE.** Attains ~60 cm TL, at least 38 cm DW. Males mature at ~53 cm TL.

**HABITAT AND BIOLOGY.** North-West Pacific; Vietnam to southern Japan, including Taiwan, Hong Kong and Philippines. Little known legskate, possibly occurring over soft bottoms of continental slope in 575–1100 m depth.

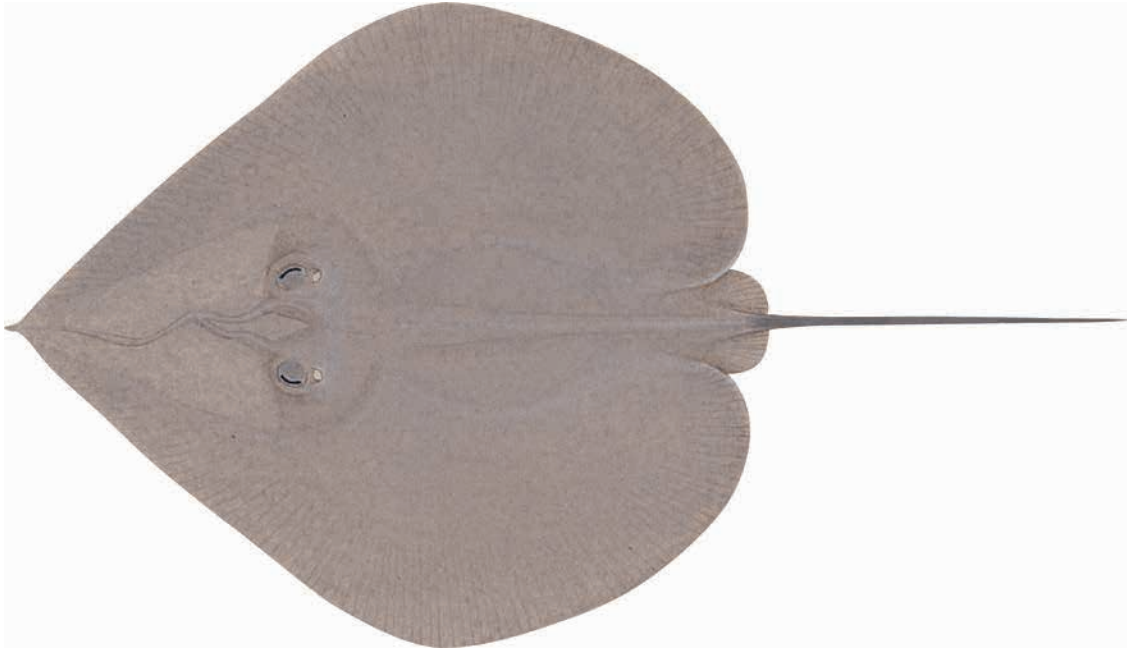
**SIMILAR SPECIES.** Differs from the Borneo Legskate (22.5) in reaching a much larger adult size (60 cm TL *vs.* 35 cm TL) and having darker dorsal and ventral surfaces.



## NARROW LEGSKATE

22.11

*Sinobatis stenosoma* (Li & Hu, in Chu, Meng, Hu & Li, 1982)



DD

**IDENTIFICATION.** Medium-sized legskate with an extremely depressed, pear-shaped disc, snout long, broadly triangular, and small, thin and fleshy filament at snout tip. Disc anterior margins almost straight, anteriormost pectoral radials almost reaching snout tip. Ventral head length ~36% of TL; preoral length ~27% of TL. Snout length ~5.6 times interorbital distance, ~2.3 times in disc width. Eyes small, somewhat oblique, orbit ~7 times in snout length; spiracles very small, positioned well behind eyes. Mouth small with ~22 tooth rows in each jaw. Skin smooth, probably except for small alar thorn patches in adult male. Tail very slender, cord-like, anteriormost part joined to full length of pelvic fins; length from cloaca ~0.6 times disc length; caudal fin small and narrow.

**COLOUR.** Dark greyish brown dorsally, interspiracular pores indistinct, pale ventrally.

**SIZE.** Attains at least 52 cm TL. Known from only 1 female specimen.

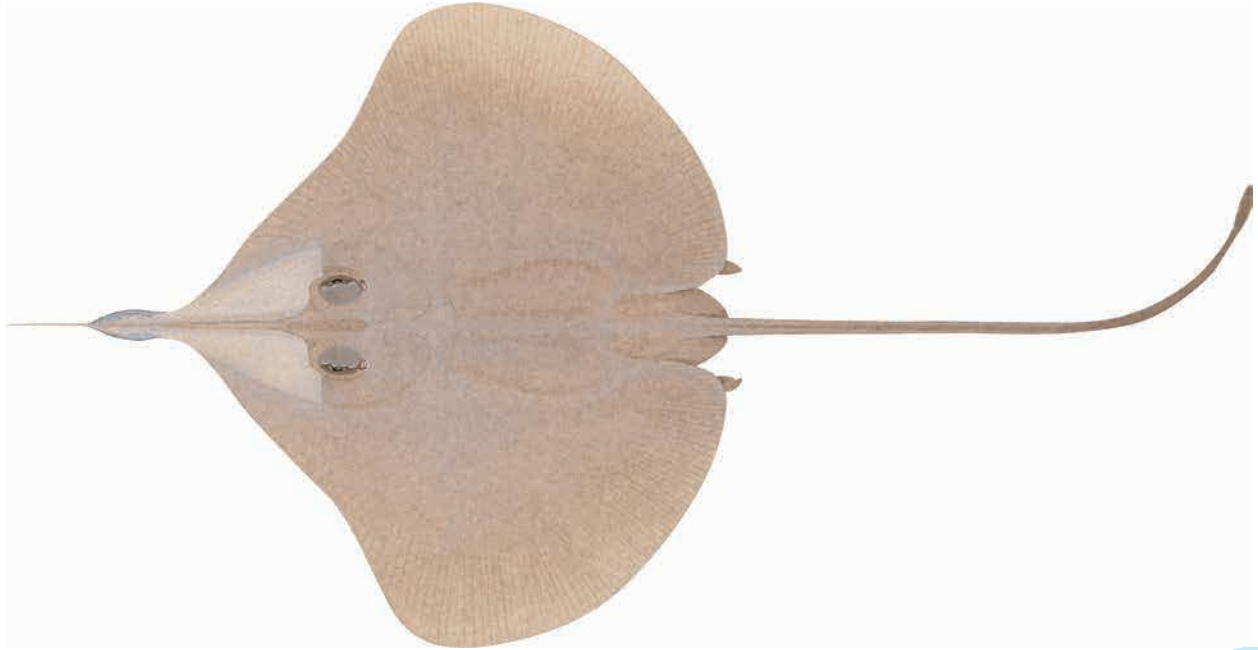
**HABITAT AND BIOLOGY.** North-West Pacific; off China (South China Sea). Upper continental slope at ~535 m depth. Life history unknown.



**SIMILAR SPECIES.** Similar to the Blackbody Legskate (22.10), but the unique type specimen of the Narrow Legskate has a much paler ventral coloration. Nevertheless, it might prove to be conspecific with that species as it seems unusual that no other specimens have appeared since 1982, particularly given the high level of fishing effort in deep parts of the China Seas adjacent to Taiwan.

## LEAFNOSE LEGSKATE

22.12

*Springeria folirostris* Bigelow & Schroeder, 1951

DD

**IDENTIFICATION.** Large legskate with an extremely depressed and broad, heart-shaped disc, long snout with leaf-like lobe at its tip, and long tail with well-developed caudal fin. Disc anterior margins strongly concave, anteriormost pectoral radials close to snout tip. Ventral head length (to base of filament) ~24–27% of TL; preoral length ~6–7% of TL. Leaf-like lobe on snout with a long slender filament at its tip, lobe width similar to interorbital space. Snout length ~8.4–8.6 times interorbital distance, ~2.6 times in disc width. Eyes small, orbit ~7–9 times in snout length (greater values in adults); spiracles very small, positioned well behind eyes. Mouth very small, arched, with 24–26 tooth rows in upper jaw. Skin smooth, except for small alar thorn patches in adult male. Tail very slender and cord-like, longer than disc (to base of leaf-like extension), equal to or exceeding disc width; caudal-fin lobes both well developed, separated at tail tip by vertebral column. Claspers short and slender in adult male, without a sharply serrated cartilage.

**COLOUR.** Dorsal surface greyish brown, markedly translucent on snout beside rostral cartilage; often with whitish areas where skin has been abraded; expansion on snout often black-edged. Undersurface pale greyish.



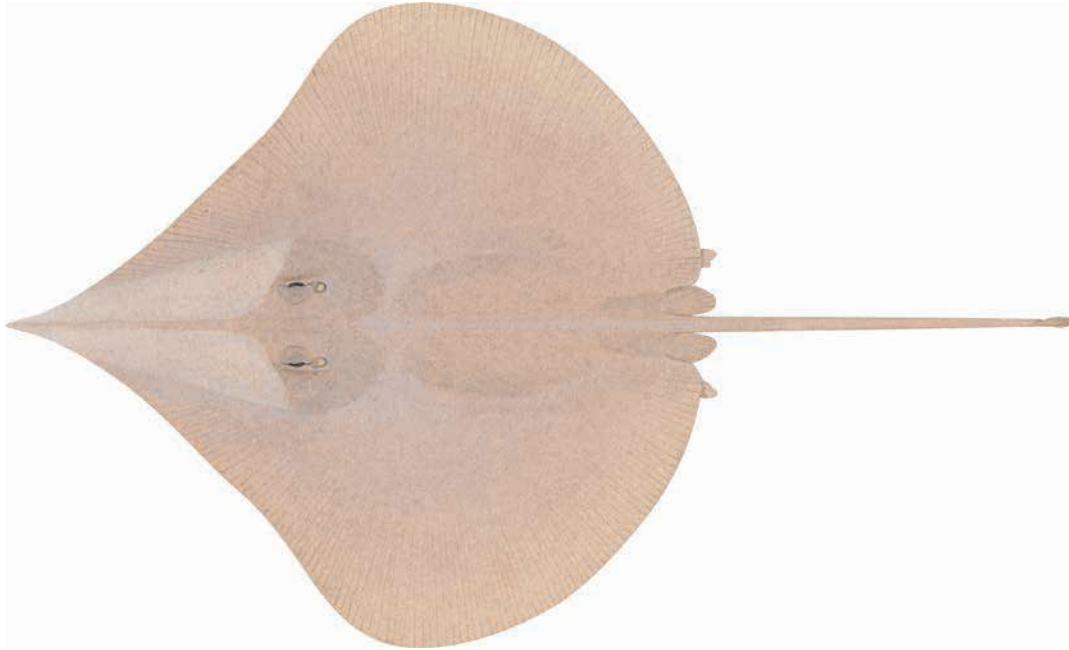
**SIZE.** Females attain 62 cm TL (to base of filament), males smaller to 58 cm TL; hatching size unknown.

**HABITAT AND BIOLOGY.** Western Central Atlantic; southern USA (Gulf of Mexico). Occurs over soft bottoms on upper continental slope at 300–510 m depths. Life history unknown.

**SIMILAR SPECIES.** Occurs in Gulf of Mexico with the Longnose Legskate (22.13), and usually at shallower depths. It has a characteristic leaf-shaped extension at the tip of the snout and better-developed lobes on the caudal fin than the Longnose Legskate.

## LONGNOSE LEGSKATE

22.13

*Springeria longirostris* (Bigelow & Schroeder, 1962)

DD

**IDENTIFICATION.** Very large legskate with a strongly depressed, pear-shaped (in females and juveniles) to broadly heart-shaped (in adult males) disc, snout very long and narrowly pointed, and short and thin filament at snout tip. Disc anterior margins almost straight to slightly convex, anteriormost pectoral radials almost reaching snout tip. Ventral head length 37–40% of TL; preoral length 29–32% of TL in large specimens, but only 24% of TL in 1 small juvenile. Snout length 7.5–10.4 times interorbital distance (larger in adults), ~1.9–2.4 times in disc width. Eyes very small, orbit ~7–11.8 times in snout length (greater values in adults); eyes close to spiracles. Mouth small with 24–28 tooth rows in each jaw. Skin smooth, except for small alar thorn patches in adult male. Tail very slender and cord-like, shorter than disc length in adults, but slightly longer than disc length in small juveniles; caudal fin with well-developed upper and very narrow lower lobe. Pectoral fin with 92–96 radials. Claspers short and slender in adult male, without a sharply serrated cartilage.

**COLOUR.** Dorsal surface light purplish to purplish grey; terminal filament black. Undersurface lighter blue; anterior part of snout dusky.

**SIZE.** Attains at least 75 cm TL. Maturity and hatching sizes unknown.



**HABITAT AND BIOLOGY.** Western Central Atlantic; southern USA (Gulf of Mexico) and Caribbean. Deepwater demersal, occurs over soft bottoms on continental slope at depths of 500–1050 m. Probably feeds on benthic invertebrates and small fishes. A relatively large teleost and a claw of a crab have been found in one female.

**SIMILAR SPECIES.** Larger, more delicate, and having a relatively longer snout than the American Legskate (22.3). Overlaps in distribution with the Leafnose Legskate (22.12) but lacks a leaf-like lobe at the snout tip characterising that species.

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