

Skates and Rays of British Columbia

Fisheries and Oceans Canada is committed to developing the highest standard of bycatch data, and to the conservation of skate species in British Columbia waters. The information in this guide is designed to assist the Department to monitor bycatch, and fish harvesters to correctly identify bycatch and to enter it in logbooks.

Drawings are not to scale.



Skates and Rays of British Columbia

A BIG SKATE *Beringraja binoculata*

- Depths 3 to 800 m; usually less than 200 m
- Total length to 200 cm
- Brown to gray with darker mottling; prominent eyespots
- Ventral surface white to muddy white
- Snout: stiff and short
- No scapular thorns; one nuchal thorn
- Continuous row of thorns, pelvic region to first dorsal fin
- Pelvic fin shallowly notched

B LONGNOSE SKATE *Raja rhina*

- Depths 20 to 660 m; usually less than 350 m
- Total length to 140 cm
- Dark brown with faint dark and light blotches; sometimes pale-centered eyespots
- Ventral surface gray, brown to black
- Snout: stiff and long
- No scapular thorns; one or two nuchal thorns
- Continuous row of thorns on tail only
- Pelvic fin deeply notched

C BROAD SKATE *Amblyraja badia*

- Depths 845 to 2,325 m
- Brown to grayish brown with darker spots
- Ventral surface has similar colouring to dorsal; pelvic fin lobes and tail darker
- Snout: stiff and short, with several thornlets on tip
- Triangular pattern of two or three scapular thorns
- Row of thorns head to tail tip; and on tail flanked by thornlets

D CALIFORNIA SKATE *Raja inornata*

- Depths 20 to 670 m
- Total length to 75 cm
- Olive brown with dark mottling; eyespots on wings
- Ventral surface is lighter than dorsal
- Snout: stiff and long
- Nuchal thorns present; no scapular thorns
- Row of thorns on tail only
- Thorn between the two dorsal fins

E SANDPAPER SKATE *Bathyraja kincadaii*

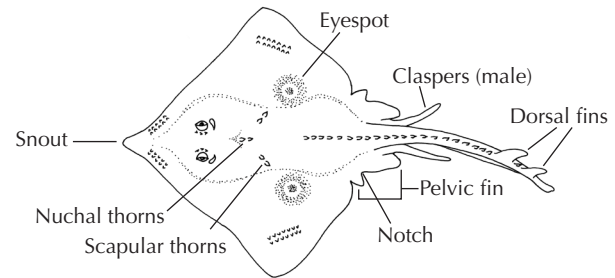
- Depths 55 to 1,400 m; usually less than 500 m
- Total length to 90 cm
- Dark brown to black, sometimes with white mottling; often with white spot on each side of tail
- Ventral surface white with dark underside of tail
- Snout: flexible and short
- Prominent scapular thorns
- Interrupted or continuous row of thorns, midback to first dorsal fin

F ALEUTIAN SKATE *Bathyraja aleutica*

- Depths 15 to 1,600 m; usually 100 to 800 m
- Total length to 155 cm
- Gray to dark brown, sometimes with black spots
- Ventral surface white with gray margins
- Snout: flexible and long
- One or two prominent scapular thorns
- Continuous row of thorns, head to first dorsal fin

G ALASKA SKATE *Bathyraja parmifera*

- Depths 20 to 1,400 m; usually 50 to 250 m
- Total length to 110 cm
- Dark grayish brown to olive brown, with black spots and sometimes white spots
- Snout: flexible and short
- Prominent scapular thorns
- Interrupted or continuous row of thorns, head to first dorsal fin
- Often mistaken for starry skate



H STARRY SKATE *Raja stellulata*

- Depths 20 to 730 m
- Total length to 75 cm
- Gray-brown with numerous dark spots; sometimes with black eyespots
- Ventral surface white with brown-gray margins
- Snout: stiff and short
- Continuous and multiple rows of thorns, midback to first dorsal fin
- Pelvic fin deeply notched
- Often mistaken for Alaska skate

I ROUGHTAIL SKATE *Bathyraja trachura*

- Depths 400 to 2,000 m; usually greater than 600 m
- Total length to 90 cm
- Plum brown to black
- Ventral surface similar colouring to dorsal
- Snout: flexible and short
- No scapular or nuchal thorns
- Prominent row of thorns, pelvic region to first dorsal fin

J DEEP SEA SKATE *Bathyraja abyssicola*

- Depths 360 to 2,900 m; usually greater than 1,000 m
- Total length to 155 cm
- Dark gray to dark brown or black
- Ventral surface darker than dorsal, whitish around mouth
- Snout: flexible, long and narrow
- No scapular thorns; one to five nuchal thorns
- Continuous row of thorns, pelvic region to tail

K WHITEBROW SKATE *Bathyraja minispinosa*

- Depths 150 to 1,400 m; usually 200 to 800 m
- Total length to 85 cm
- Dark brown to grayish brown; white region around eyes
- Ventral surface similar colouring to dorsal; white mouth
- Snout: flexible, long and pointed
- No scapular thorns; nuchal thorns present
- Row of prominent thorns on tail

L COMMANDER SKATE *Bathyraja lindbergi*

- Depths 120 to at least 950 m
- Total length to 93 cm
- Both surfaces dark grayish brown
- Snout: flexible, short, broad
- No scapular thorns
- Continuous row of thorns head to first dorsal fin

M PACIFIC TORPEDO RAY *Tetronarce californica*

- Depths to 275 m
- Total length to 137 cm
- Dark gray to bluish or brown
- Ventral surface lighter in colour
- Oval-shaped body
- First dorsal fin twice as large as second
- Large caudal fin

N PELAGIC STINGRAY *Dasyatis violacea*

- Pelagic at surface to 250 m
- Total length to 98 cm
- Both surfaces uniform dark purple in colour
- Broad, wedge-shaped disc
- Whip-like tail with long, stinging spine
- Lacks caudal, dorsal and pelvic fins

If you are uncertain about an identification, please take a photo and Fisheries and Oceans Canada will assist you.

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Published by Fisheries and Oceans Canada
 Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0E6
 Également disponible en français.

DFO/2011-1797 Cat. No. Fs23-575/2012E
 ISBN 978-1-100-19914-6

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