

SMALL-EYED RAY

Raja microocellata

1 & 4

2

3

Dorsal view ♀

Ventral view ♀

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Raja microocellata Montagu, 1818

DISTRIBUTION

Northeast Atlantic from the British Isles to Morocco. Most commonly found in the Bristol and English Channels. Absent from the North Sea and Mediterranean Sea.¹⁻⁴

COMMON NAMES

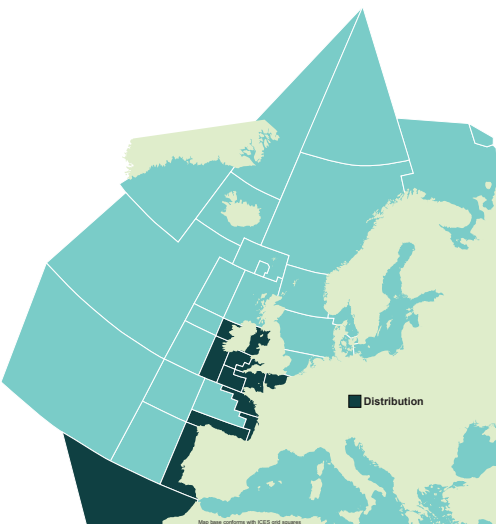
SMALL-EYED RAY, Small-Eyed Skate, Painted Ray, Owl Ray, Painted Skate, Kleinäugiger Rochen (DEU), Raya Colorada (ESP), Raie Mêlée (FRA), Kleinoogrog (NLD), Raia Zimbreira (PRT).

IDENTIFICATION AND COLOUR

- 1 Conspicuously small eyes.^{1,4}
 - 2 Tail slightly shorter than body.^{1,4}
 - 3 Row of ~50 thorns along midline to first dorsal fin.^{1,4}
 - 4 Orbital thorns present.^{1,4}
- Dorsal surface pale sandy brown to olive grey.^{1,4}
 - Light bands running almost parallel to margins of disc.^{1,4}
 - Lighter streaks, spots and blotches in regular patterns.^{1,4}
 - Ventral surface white.^{1,4}

SIZE AND BIOLOGY

- Birth: 10–13cm.
- Mature: ~58cm.
- Max. TL: 91cm.¹
- Oviparous, females produce 54–61 eggcases annually.^{1,4}
- Eggcases frequently laid June–September. Embryonic development takes 7 months.¹
- Juveniles feed on benthic crustaceans; adults primarily feed on teleosts.¹



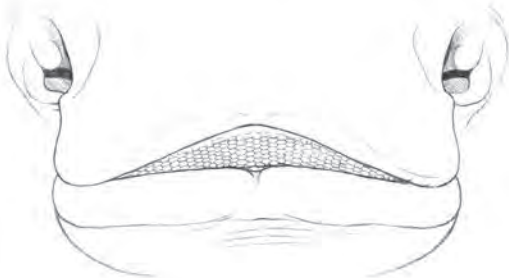
SMALL-EYED RAY

EGGCASE

- ▶ 31–59mm wide.⁵
- ▶ 70–95mm long (excl. horns).⁵
- ▶ Long, filamentous horns and fibrous keels.^{1,5}
- ▶ Similar eggcase to the Thornback Ray, *Raja clavata*.^{1,5}



TEETH



- ▶ Obtuse, flat and close-set in females and juveniles.^{1,4}
- ▶ Middle series sharper in males.^{1,4}
- ▶ Upper jaw: 44–52.^{1,4}

SIMILAR SPECIES

Sandy Ray
Leucoraja circularis



Shagreen Ray
Leucoraja fullonica



Cuckoo Ray
Leucoraja naevus



Blonde Ray
Raja brachyura



Spotted Ray
Raja montagui



Undulate Ray
Raja undulata



HABITAT

- ▶ Benthic to ~100m. Found on the continental shelf over soft substrates favouring inshore sandy bays and sandbanks.^{1,4,6}
- ▶ Juveniles occur in shallow water, larger specimens found further from shore.^{2,4}

CONSERVATION STATUS*

- ▶ IUCN Red List: Global: Near Threatened (2009)
Europe: Near Threatened (2015)
- ▶ The Small-eyed Ray is potentially vulnerable to overexploitation from localised fishing and habitat disturbance due to restricted geographical distribution and localised abundance.^{2,3,7}

COMMERCIAL IMPORTANCE

- ▶ Not usually targeted but an important part of commercial skate fisheries in parts of South Wales, Devon and Cornwall, particularly the Bristol Channel.⁸
- ▶ Taken as bycatch in trawl and gillnet demersal fisheries.^{1–3}
- ▶ Popular species with recreational anglers.¹

MANAGEMENT*

- ▶ Subject to regulations under the CFP.

REFERENCES

- 1 Ebert & Stehmann. 2013.
- 2 Ellis, J. 2009.
- 3 Ellis & Walls. 2015.
- 4 Last *et al.* 2016.
- 5 Gordon *et al.* 2016.
- 6 Kaiser *et al.* 2004.
- 7 Gibson *et al.* 2008.
- 8 ICES Advice. 2016.