



Dorsal view ♀

Ventral view ♀

## SCIENTIFIC NAME

*Leucoraja naevus* (Müller and Henle, 1841).

## DISTRIBUTION

Northeast Atlantic from Norway to Morocco<sup>o</sup>. Western Mediterranean as far as Tunisia and Greece<sup>o</sup>.



## COMMON NAME

Cuckoo Ray, Cuckoo Skate, Pudding, Stars, Crownback, Butterfly Skate, Sandy Ray, Grootoogrog (Ne), Raie Fleurie (Fr), Kuckucksroche (De), Razza Cucolo (It), Raya Santiguosa (Es).

## IDENTIFICATION

- 4 rows of thorns along tail. Inner 2 continue onto back.
- 9–13 orbital thorns.
- Spinulose skin dorsally<sup>o</sup>.

## COLOUR

- Large black and yellow eyespot on each pectoral fin.
- Light grey to brown dorsal surface.
- Ventral surface white with dark margin<sup>o</sup>.

## BIOLOGY AND SIZE

- Born: 9–10cm<sup>iii</sup>. Mature: 60cm<sup>ix</sup>. Max TL: 75cm ♀, 68cm ♂<sup>vi</sup>.
- Juveniles feed predominantly on small crustaceans and polychaetes. Adults prey on bony fish<sup>iv</sup>.
- Juveniles are found further offshore (southern Irish Sea, St. George's Channel) than the young of other *Raja* species<sup>ii</sup>.

## SIMILAR SPECIES

- *Leucoraja circularis*, **Sandy Ray**
- *Leucoraja melitensis*, **Maltese Ray**
- *Raja microcellata*, **Small-eyed Ray**
- *Raja montagui*, **Spotted Ray**
- *Raja radula*, **Rough Ray**

## HABITAT

- Demersal from 250–290m<sup>i</sup>.
- Most common ~200m<sup>v</sup>.
- Prefer soft substrates such as sand and mud<sup>ii</sup>.

## CONSERVATION STATUS

- Compared to most skates, Cuckoo Rays are small with high fecundity making them less vulnerable to fishing pressure<sup>v</sup>.
- **Red List status:** Least Concern (2008).  
Near Threatened in Mediterranean.

## COMMERCIAL IMPORTANCE

- No targeted fishery but it is an important bycatch for some multispecies trawl fisheries, particularly in the Celtic Sea and Bay of Biscay<sup>v</sup>.
- Estimates for the French fleet are that ~50% are discarded at sea<sup>vii</sup>.
- Popular with recreational anglers.
- 2009 – Subject to a TAC in European waters.

## HANDLING AND THORN ARRANGEMENT

- Handle with care.
- Multiple rows of thorns on tail.
- 2 rows of thorns on body.
- Orbital thorns.

## REFERENCES

- Clark, R. S.; 1926. Fishery Board for Scotland.
- Ellis, J. R. *et al*; 2005. *J. Northw. Atl. Fish. Sci.* 35: 195–213.
- FAO. 2005.
- Farias, I. *et al*; 2005. ICES.
- Gibson, C. *et al*; 2006. IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group.
- Luna, S. M.; 2009. Fishbase.
- Pastors, M. A.; 2002. Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation.
- Shark Trust; 2008.
- Vaz, S. *et al*; 2006. ICES. *Journal of Marine Science*, Vol. 64.
- Whitehead, P. J. P. *et al* 1986. UNESCO.

## TEETH

- Sharp cusped teeth<sup>v</sup>.
- 54–60 rows in the upper jaw<sup>v</sup>.



## EGGCASE

- 1 50–70mm in length (excluding horns).
  - 2 30–50mm in width.
  - 3 Rounded body.
  - 4 If unbroken, very long horns at top<sup>viii</sup>.
- Similar eggcase to the Spotted Ray, *Raja montagui*.  
(Eggcase shown actual size.)

