

Dorsal view ♀

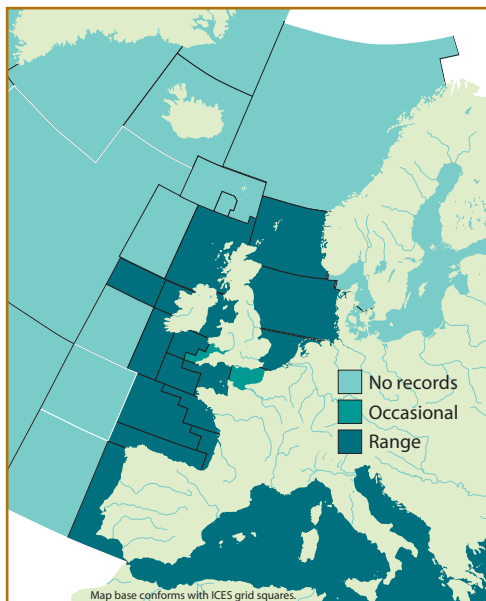
Ventral view ♀

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Leucoraja naevus (Müller and Henle, 1841).

DISTRIBUTION

Northeast Atlantic from Norway to Morocco^x. Western Mediterranean as far as Tunisia and Greece^x.



COMMON NAME

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

IDENTIFICATION

- 1 4 rows of thorns along tail. Inner 2 continue onto back.
- 2 9–13 orbital thorns.
- 3 Spinulose skin dorsally^x.

COLOUR

- Large black and yellow eyespot on each pectoral fin.
- Light grey to brown dorsal surface.
- Ventral surface white with dark margin^x.

BIOLOGY AND SIZE

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

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 250–290mⁱ.
- Most common ~200m^v.
- Prefer soft substrates such as sand and mudⁱⁱ.

CONSERVATION STATUS

- Compared to most skates, Cuckoo Rays are small with high fecundity making them less vulnerable to fishing pressure^v.
- 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^v.
- Estimates for the French fleet are that ~50% are discarded at sea^{vii}.
- 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.

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TEETH

- Sharp cusped teeth^{iv}.
- 54–60 rows in the upper jawⁱ.



EGGCASE

- 50–70mm in length (excluding horns).
 - 30–50mm in width.
 - Rounded body.
 - If unbroken, very long horns at top^{viii}.
- Similar eggcase to the Spotted Ray, *Raja montagui*.
(Eggcase shown actual size.)

