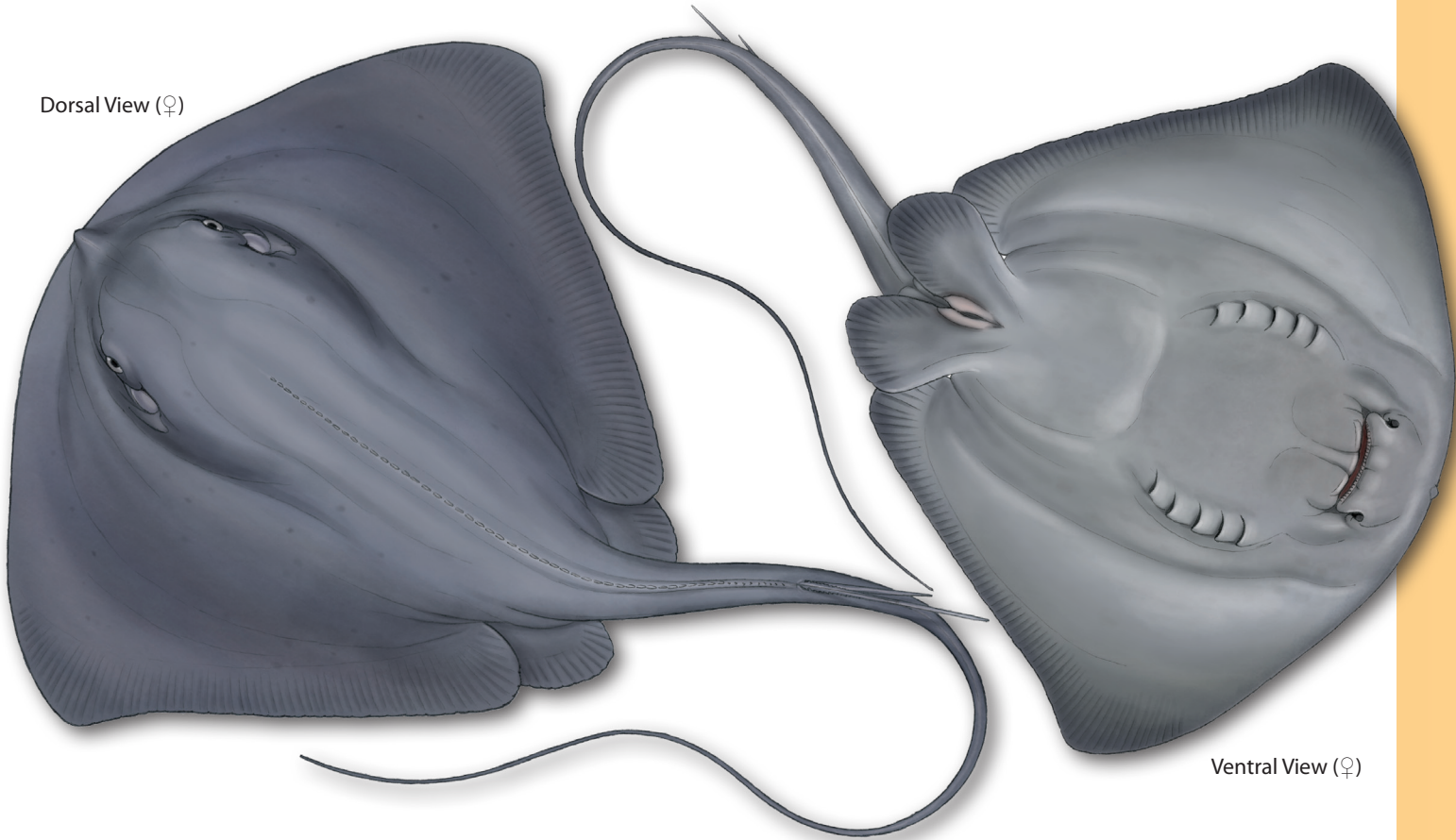


Dorsal View (♀)



Ventral View (♀)

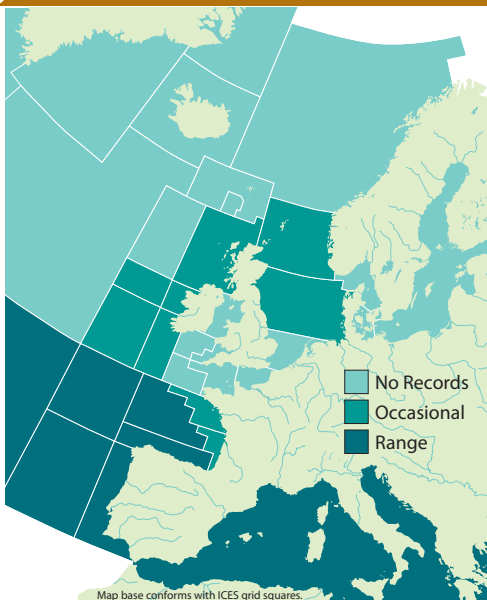
COMMON NAMES

Pelagic Stingray, Violet Stingray, Blue Stingray, Guiler's Stingray, Pastenague Violette (Fr), Raya Latigo Violeta (Es), Trigone Viola (It).

SYNONYMS

Dasyatis violacea (Bonaparte, 1832), *Trygon violacea* (Bonaparte, 1832), *Dasyatis purpurea* (Müller & Henle, 1841), *Dasyatis purpureus* (Müller & Henle, 1841), *Trygon purpurea* (Müller & Henle, 1841), *Trygon violaceus* (Duméril, 1865), *Dasyatis (Pteroplatytrygon) violaceus* (Fowler, 1910), *Dasybatus (Dasybatus) violaceus* (Garman, 1913), *Dasyatis atratus* (Ishiyama & Okada, 1955), *Dasyatis guileri* (Last, 1979).

DISTRIBUTION



The Pelagic Stingray is found worldwide in tropical and temperate waters, although it is absent from the Indian Ocean. In the east Atlantic it is known from the southwest British Isles, the Cape Verde Islands, the Mediterranean Sea, west Africa around Gabon/Angola and South Africa (Bester *et al.*, Unknown).

APPEARANCE

- Broad disc, wider than long.
- Broadly rounded snout with terminal lobe.
- Tail is double the length of the body with long lower caudal fold.
- Small eyes do not protrude from the body.
- Spine with 161–181 (♀), 166–191 (♂) serrations.
- Spine 121–132mm (♀), 109–147mm (♂).
- Cuspidate teeth in both sexes. 34 files of teeth in upper jaw, 39 in lower.
- Dark purple or blue-green dorsally. Deep purple to grey ventrally. No distinguishing markings.
- Maximum size of 80cm disc width (DW) and 160cm total length (TL).

The body of the Pelagic Stingray is wider than it is long with a tail that is double the length of the body. The snout is rounded with a prominent terminal lobe (Bester *et al.*, Unknown). The eyes are small and do not protrude from the body (de Siqueira *et al.*, 2007).

A useful distinguishing feature of the Pelagic Stingray is the venomous tail spine, between the serrations of which are distinct 'cul-de-sacs'. Depending on the area, the number of serrations can vary from 161–181 for females and 166–191 for males. The length of the spine also varies with location from 121–132mm for females and 109–147mm for males (Schwartz, 2005; Schwartz, 2007a; Schwartz, 2007b).

The dorsal colouration is dark purple to blue-green. The ventral surface is deep purple to grey. There are no markings making it difficult for predators near the surface to pick out the Pelagic Stingray against the dark water below (Bester *et al.*, Unknown).

SIMILAR SPECIES

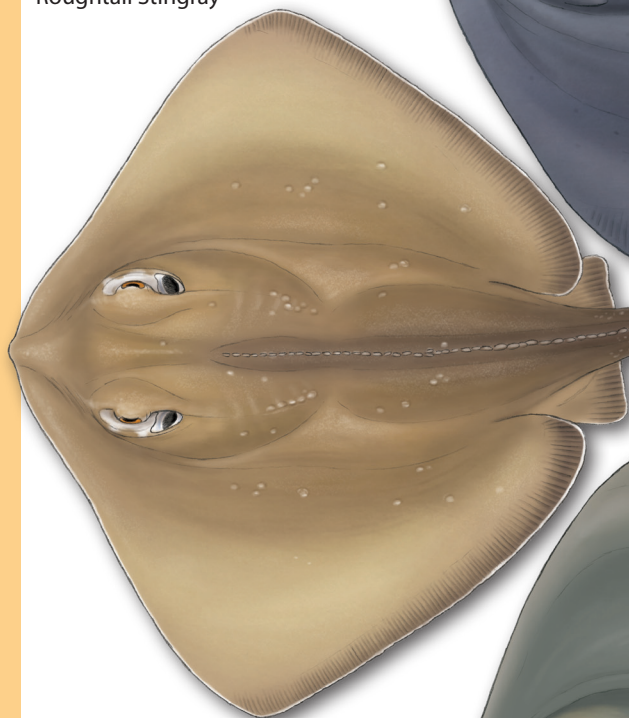
Dasyatis centroura, Roughtail Stingray

Dasyatis pastinaca, Common Stingray

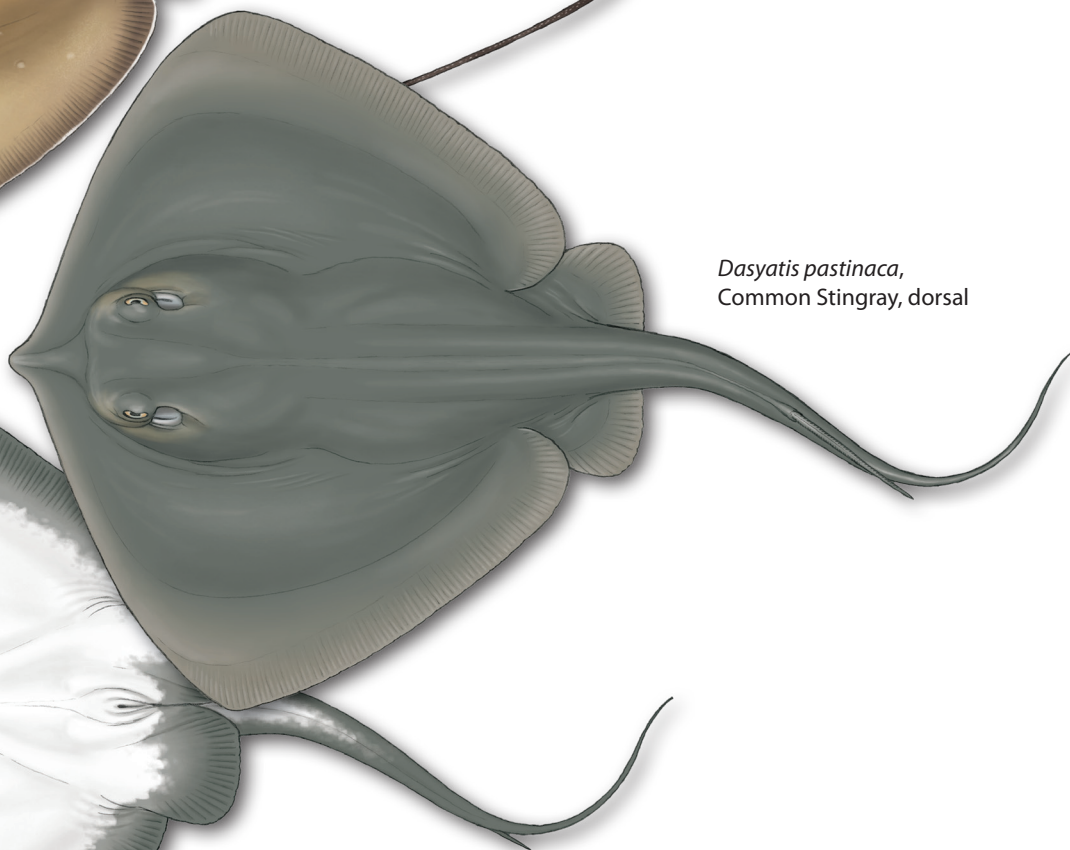
Pteroplatytrygon tortonesi, Tortonese's Stingray
(not illustrated)

Pteroplatytrygon violacea,
Pelagic Stingray

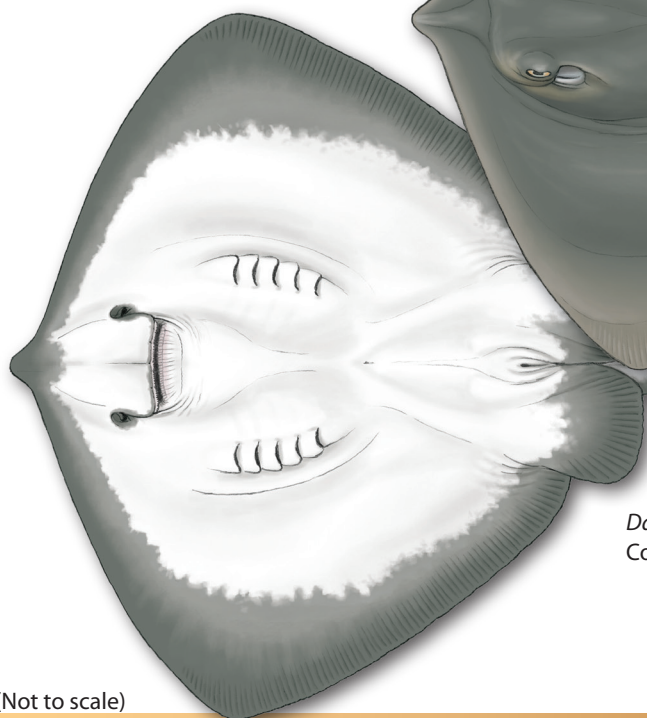
Dasyatis centroura,
Roughtail Stingray



Dasyatis pastinaca,
Common Stingray, dorsal



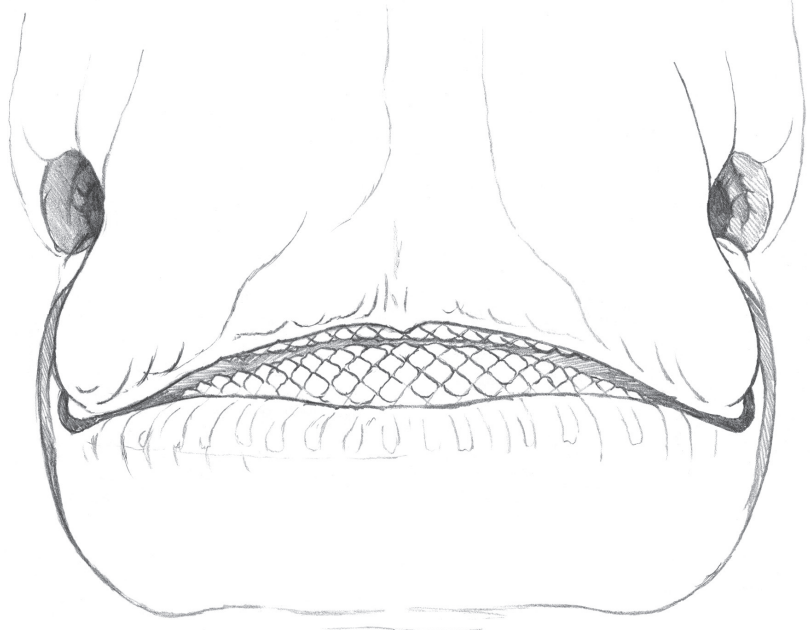
Dasyatis pastinaca,
Common Stingray, ventral



(Not to scale)

TEETH

The upper jaw projects slightly at the symphysis while the lower jaw is slightly indented. The upper jaw has 34 files of teeth, 17 on each side. The lower jaw has 39 files of teeth, 19 each side of the symphyseal tooth. Unlike most stingrays, the teeth are sharp in both sexes (Bester *et al.*, Unknown).



ECOLOGY & BIOLOGY

HABITAT

The Pelagic Stingray is a pelagic species, possibly the only Dasyatid that is not found on or near the bottom. This makes it vulnerable to large pelagic predators such as the Oceanic Whitetip Shark, *Carcharhinus longimanus*, a known predator of the species. It can be found at depths up to 238m (780ft) although it is most usually found in the top 100m (330ft) over deep water (Bester *et al.*, Unknown).

EGGCASE

N/A

DIET

Analysis of stomach contents have shown that the diet of the Pelagic Stingray consists mainly of planktonic crustaceans such as euphausiids and amphipods, as well as jellyfish, squid, octopus, shrimp and small pelagic fish such as herring and mackerel. It has been observed using its pectoral fins to manipulate food to its jaws (Bester *et al.*, Unknown).

REPRODUCTION

Males reach sexual maturity around 35–40cm DW, females around 40–50cm DW. An ovoviviparous species, the Pelagic Stingray retain their eggcases within the uterus. At some point early on in the gestation period, the embryo emerges from the eggcase into the uterus. During the first part of the gestation period the embryos are nourished by a yolk sac which most likely lasts until they leave the eggcase. When they reach a size of around 5cm DW, the yolk sac runs out and they are nourished by uterine milk (histotroph) (Bester *et al.*, Unknown).

After 2–4 months the female gives birth to 4–9 young with each pup measuring 15–25cm DW. In the warm waters of the central and western Pacific Ocean, parturition occurs through March. In the cooler waters of the Mediterranean, it takes place during August and September (Bester *et al.*, Unknown).

COMMERCIAL IMPORTANCE

There is no commercial interest in the species although it is regularly taken as bycatch by driftnets and longlines (Bester *et al.*, Unknown). Landed and utilised in some areas such as Indonesia (IUCN, 2008).

THREATS, CONSERVATION, LEGISLATION

The Pelagic Stingray is regularly captured on longline gear targeting tuna and swordfish, although it is rarely landed. It is utilised in some areas such as Indonesia but for the most part is discarded at sea, sometimes with serious mouth and jaw damage limiting survival rates (IUCN, 2008). It has been reported from the southwest Atlantic and from the Mediterranean that "hooks are removed by smashing the fish against the rail because the crew are concerned about injury from the ray's spine, which can result in them being off work for a few days" (Domingo *et al.*, 2005; Piovano *et al.*, 2008).

While no decrease in stocks of the species have been observed, declining stocks of more valuable species could lead to increased utilisation and landings need to be carefully monitored. Its widespread distribution and relatively high fecundity should make the Pelagic Stingray more resistant to fishing pressure than many other elasmobranchs (IUCN, 2008).

IUCN RED LIST ASSESSMENT

Least Concern (2008).

HANDLING AND THORN ARRANGEMENT

- Handle with care.
- Large venomous spine 1/3 of the way down tail.
- Sharp teeth in both sexes.



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