

Thornyback Ray (*Raja clavata*)

Chondrichthyes (Chordata:Rajiformes)

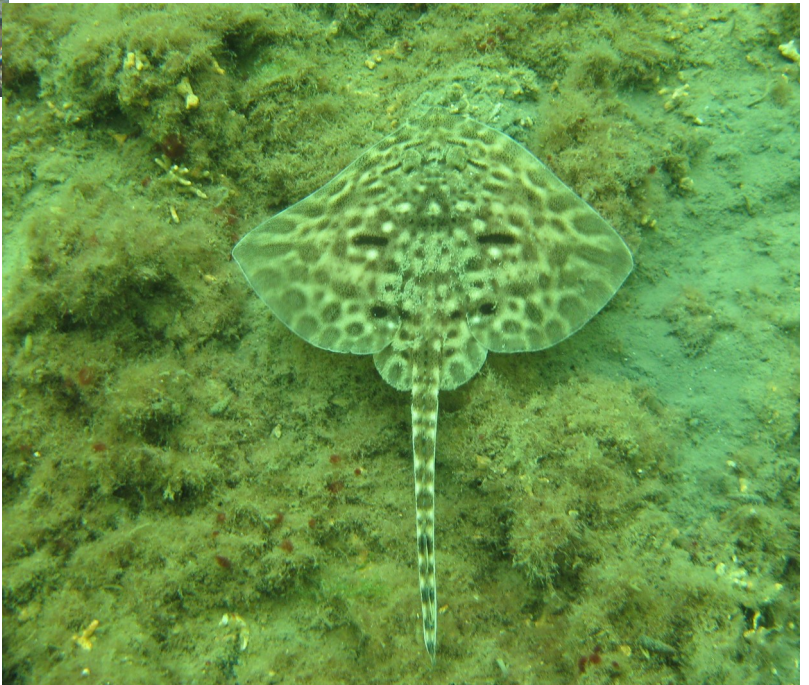


Taxonomy: Chordata->Chondrichthyes->Rajiformes

IUCN Red List Categorisation: Near Threatened

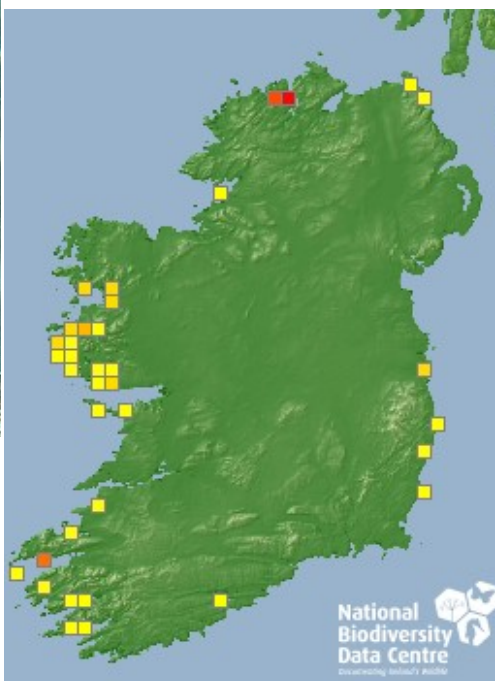
One of the most abundant rays found in inshore coastal waters in the northern Europe it has a broad range, from Iceland to South Africa and encompassing all of the Mediterranean. In Ireland this species is considered of Least Concern¹ and is the most abundant ray in Irish waters. Frequently caught as a bycatch species in commercial fisheries has lead to its decline and its Near Threatened status though it has not declined as heavily as other large Rajids.

The ray species most commonly seen by divers, thornyback rays can reach sizes of up to 1m but are rarely that large. Colouration can be highly variable, though the photo (above) shows the typical colouration dark with yellow patches, it may also be light brown and speckled (right). The spines on the tail, along with the characteristic light and dark banding allow this species to be identified in the field. While thorns are found in a number of ray species in the thornyback ray they the length of the back to the first dorsal fin.



What dive sites can I see it at?

Records are concentrated on the west coast and in sheltered locations as rays favour sandy, gravelly or muddy bottoms. Particularly regular sightings in Killary Fjord and Kilkieran Bay.



1. Clarke, M., Farrell, E.D., Roche, W., Murray, T.E., Foster, S. and Marnell, F. (2016) Ireland Red List No. 11: Cartilaginous fish [sharks, skates, rays and chimaeras]. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. Dublin, Ireland.

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