

Rays and skates: interesting facts

Rays and skates are flattened fish that are closely related to sharks. All belong to a group of fish called **Elasmobranchs**.

There are many different types of ray including **Stingrays, Electric rays, Butterfly rays, Round rays, Manta rays, guitarfish, and sawfish**.

DID YOU KNOW?

Rays protect themselves with **venomous spines or barbs**, in their tail. Skates rely on thorny projections on their backs and tails.

Stingrays and skates feed on **crustaceans, small fish, snails, clams, shrimp** and other small sea creatures.

Overfishing, habitat loss and climate change are the major threats to rays. They are also hunted for their **gill rakers** (used for feeding) for use in Chinese medicine.

Fossil records date Stingrays back to the Jurassic period, **150 million years ago!**

539 Number of **ray species** assessed under **IUCN Red List**.

107 The number classified as **threatened**.



Stingrays are **ovoviviparous**, meaning the young are hatched from eggs that are held within the body. Skates are **oviparous**, meaning they lay eggs.

The natural **predators** of stingrays are **sharks, other large fish, seals, and sea lions**.

DID YOU KNOW?

2008 saw one of our female **Bluespotted Ribbontail rays** give birth to a **set of twins** – a European first!

DID YOU KNOW?

Humans should do the **'stingray shuffle'** when walking along sandy bottoms to give any stingrays in the vicinity enough **warning** to swim away. Don't forget to wear sandals!

DID YOU KNOW?

The smallest ray is the **Short-Nose Electric ray** which is approximately **10cm** across and weighs about **400g**. The **Oceanic Manta ray** is the largest ray reaching up to **7m** in wing span and weighs **2,000kg**.

Electric rays are named for their ability to generate and discharge a strong **electric current** to **stun prey** and for defence from potential **predators**.

The Deep is part of the **European Breeding Programme** for the **Bluespotted Ribbontail ray** and **Blue Spot stingray**, as well as the species monitoring programme for the **Honeycomb Whiptail ray**. This means we are helping to **safeguard** populations of these species and are leading the way in **pioneering new husbandry techniques**.