



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
NORTHEAST REGION  
One Blackburn Drive  
Gloucester, MA 01930-2298

August 22, 2007

Dear Skate Permit Holder:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northeast (NE) Regional Office has recently been receiving reports of landings of prohibited skate species, and questions on skate species identification. This letter is intended to clarify the regulations under the NE Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan (Skate FMP), with regards to which species may be retained and which species are prohibited.

There are currently seven skate species managed under the Skate FMP: Barndoor skate, thorny skate, smooth skate, winter skate, little skate, clearnose skate, and rosette skate. You must have a Federal open access Skate Permit to possess or land these skates in or from Federal waters. Federally permitted vessels, and vessels fishing in Federal waters, are **prohibited from retaining, possessing, or landing barndoor and thorny skates throughout the NE Region**. Additionally, these vessels are **prohibited from retaining, possessing, or landing smooth skates from within the Gulf of Maine Regulated Mesh Area**. The other five skate species may be retained in accordance with the skate regulations (50 CFR Part 648, Subpart O).

Barndoor skates are mainly distributed on Georges Bank, while thorny and smooth skates are primarily found in the deeper waters of the Gulf of Maine. These species (and their wings) are readily identifiable based on their external characteristics. The attached Skate Identification Guide will help you identify prohibited skates and distinguish them from species that may be retained. Full color skate identification cards are also available from the NE Regional Office web site at: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/sfd/sfdskate.html>.

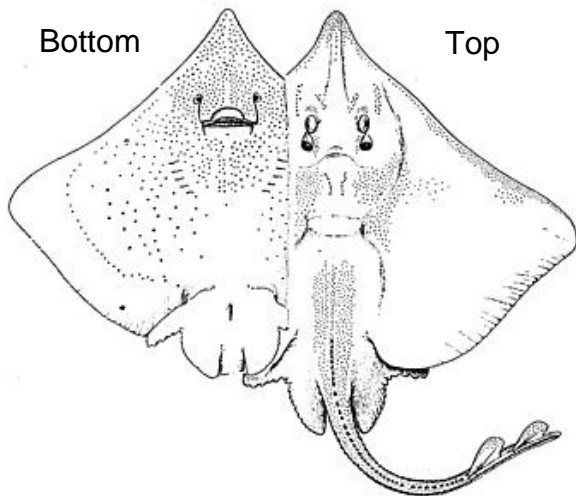
NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement will be monitoring skate landings to ensure that prohibited skate species are not being landed. If you have any questions, please contact the Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978) 281-9315.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Kurkul  
Regional Administrator



# Prohibited Skate Species of the Northeast Region



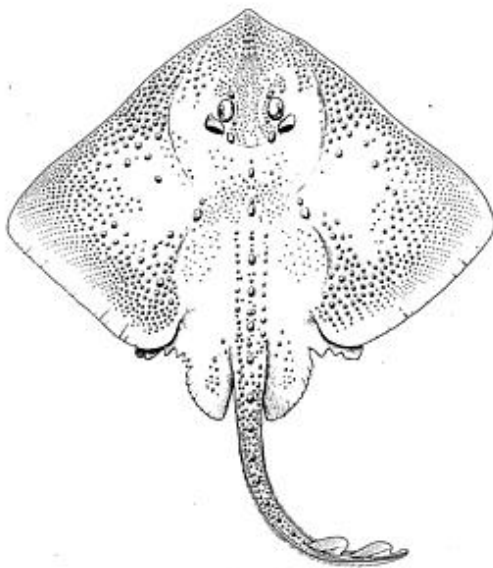
## BARNDOOR SKATE (*Dipturus laevis*)

### ***Prohibited throughout the NE Region***

**Distribution:** Canada – North Carolina, 0-235 fathoms, common 25-50 fathoms on Georges Bank, rarely south of Hudson Canyon

**Max Length:** 60 in (152 cm)

**Features:** Very pointed snout.  
Reddish brown on top/gray on bottom.  
Small dark spots covering body.  
No spines on wings.



## THORNY SKATE (*Amblyraja radiata*)

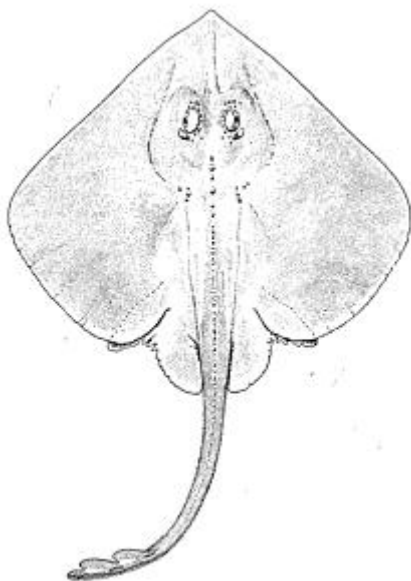
### ***Prohibited throughout the NE Region***

**Other Names:** Mud Skate, Starry Skate

**Distribution:** Greenland – South Carolina, 10-545 fathoms, common in 50+ fathoms in the Gulf of Maine, rarely south of Georges Bank

**Max Length:** 41 in (104 cm)

**Features:** Large thorns along back and shoulders.  
Brown/Grayish body surface.  
Tail shorter than body.



## SMOOTH SKATE (*Malacoraja senta*)

### ***Prohibited in the Gulf of Maine***

**Other Names:** Prickly Skate, Smooth Tailed Skate

**Distribution:** Canada – South Carolina, 25-500 fathoms, common in 50+ fathoms in the Gulf of Maine, rarely south of Georges Bank

**Max Length:** 26 in (64 cm)

**Features:** Pointed snout.  
No hard spines on wings.  
Pale brown coloration.