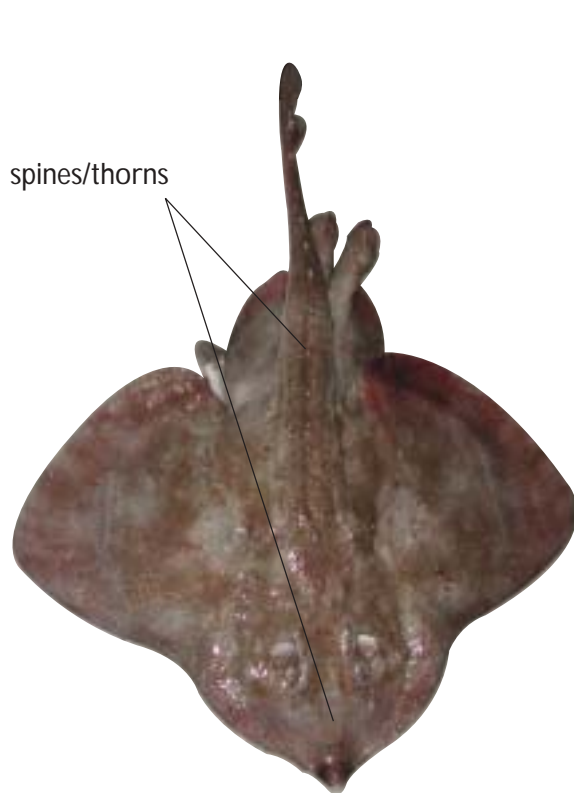


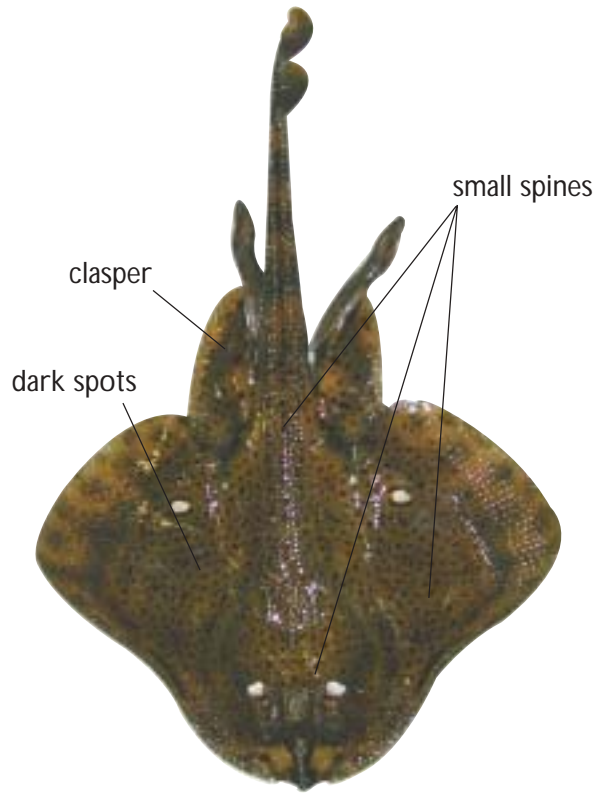
Skates of the Western Gulf of Maine

Skates are bottom-dwelling, egg-laying fish that are related to sharks and stingrays. Five species are common to the Gulf of Maine. All are both scavengers and carnivores that feed on a variety of organisms such as crustaceans, mollusks, worms and fish. Skates reach sexual maturity at a late age, have few offspring, and are relatively long lived. In addition, egg gestation rates can range from nine months up to six years. These characteristics, coupled with fisheries that select for the removal of large individuals, make skates highly susceptible to over fishing.



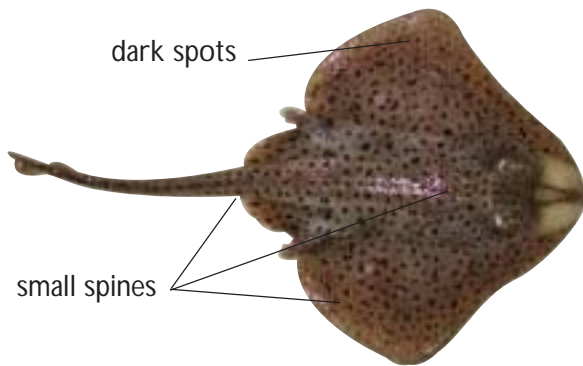
Thorny Skate (*Amblyraja radiata*)

- **AKA:** Starry Skate, Mud Skate
- **Depth range:** 25 to 75+ fathoms, most common in waters 50 fathoms or deeper.
- **Max size:** 41 in. (103cm) long, 25 lb.
- **Color:** Dark brown to grayish body surface, which may contain irregular dark spots.
- Conspicuous spines that resemble rose thorns, found on midline of back and tail.
- **STOCK STATUS:** overfished



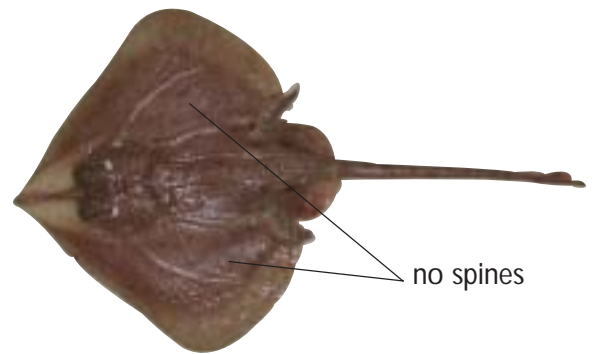
Winter Skate (*Leucoraja ocellata*)

- **AKA:** Big Skate, Spotted Skate, Eyed Skate
- **Depth range:** shoal to 60 fathoms, most common in 25-35 fathoms.
- **Max size:** 43 in. (108cm) long, 15 lb.
- **Color:** Light brown body surface covered with small dark spots.
- Small spines cover majority of dorsal surface.
- Juveniles (less than 12 in. long) look very similar to the little skate and the two are often indistinguishable from one another.
- Males less than 22 in. long have small and inconspicuous claspers.
- Females less than 22 in. long lack small, rough patches of spines around the cloacal vent.
- **STOCK STATUS:** not overfished



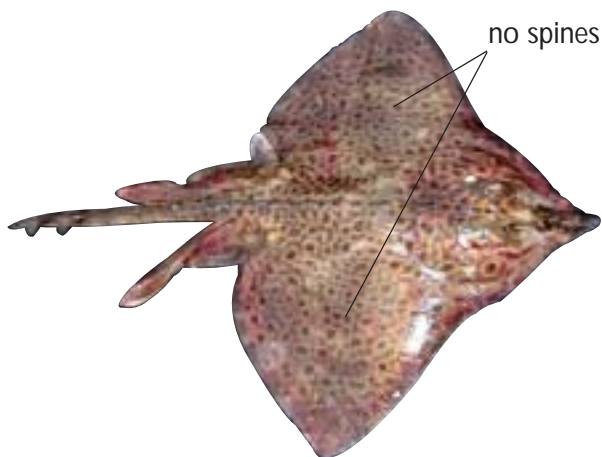
Little Skate (*Leucoraja erinacea*)

- **AKA:** Summer Skate, Common Skate
- **Depth range:** shoal to 75 fathoms, most common in 25-50 fathoms.
- **Max size:** 22 in. (55cm) long, 4 lb.
- **Color:** Light brown dorsal surface covered with small dark spots. Small spines cover majority of body surface.
- Males 14-22 in. long have large conspicuous claspers.
- Females 14-22 in. long have rough patches of spines surrounding the cloacal vent.
- **STOCK STATUS:** not overfished



Smooth Skate (*Malacoraja senta*)

- **AKA:** Prickly Skate, Smooth Tailed Skate
- **Depth range:** 25 to 75+ fathoms, most common in waters 50 fathoms or deeper.
- **Max size:** 26 in. (64cm) long, 2.5 lb.
- **Color:** Pale brown, may have small dark spots on dorsal body surface.
- Wings lack hard spines.
- Pointed snout
- **STOCK STATUS:** not overfished



Barndoor Skate (*Dipturus laevis*)

- **Depth range:** shoal to 100 fathoms, most common in 25-50 fathoms.
- **Max size:** 60 in. (152cm) long, 40 lb.
- **Color:** Brownish (may have reddish hue), with small dark spots covering dorsal body surface, distinct ventral gray coloration.
- Wings lack hard spines.
- Very pointed snout.
- **STOCK STATUS:** overfished

For more information:

James Sulikowski
 134 Spaulding Hall
 Department of Zoology
 University of New Hampshire
 Durham, NH 03824
 603.862.4153
 jsulikow@hotmail.com

Stock status for each species based on the annual report to Congress on the status of U.S. fisheries — 2001 by:

Office of Sustainable Fisheries
 National Marine Fisheries Service
 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
 U.S. Department of Commerce



Wetzel's Encyclopedia

