

Ocellated Ray

(*Potamotrygon motoro*)

Habitat and Distribution: Found in freshwater sandy river bottoms in Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

Size: Most are about 1 foot in diameter

Wild Diet: Worms, crustaceans, mollusks, and small bottom fish.

Predators: Unknown

Life Span: 15-20 years

Reproduction: These rays are sexually mature at four years of age. Gestation is 2-3 months, at the end of which the female gives birth to live young. Litter size averages 12 pups.

Behavior: Ocellated rays spend most of their time in the sand and tend to ignore other fish. They do not sting unless provoked.

Conservation Connection: Currently, freshwater rays are hunted as a food source in some regions of the Amazon. In the past 15 years, as many as 20,000 stingrays have been removed from their habitats and sold to the pet trade. Scientists are looking into obtaining actual population numbers and studying the effects of human impact, such as the clearing of rainforests, has on rays.

Interesting Facts: Females are slightly larger than males. Their bodies are gray or tan with black spots on top and a white underside. They have a venomous stinger near the end of their tail that they can use for defense.

