

## ABOUT OUR STINGRAYS

April 30, 2013

### Atlantic, or sabina, stingray

**Description:** Brown or yellowish brown on top, becoming lighter toward the margins of their discs. Maximum disc width of 18 inches; one of the smallest rays in the family of whip-tail stingrays.

**Range:** Coastal resident of the western North Atlantic, ranging from Chesapeake Bay south to Florida, and in the Gulf of Mexico south to Campeche, Mexico.

**Habitat:** Sand or silt seabeds, perfect for hiding from predators.

**Status:** Least concern.



### Bluespotted maskray

**Description:** Gray to brown disc with blue and black spots; these rays also have a dusky band, or mask, across their eyes. Maximum disc width of 15 inches.

**Range:** Wide range in the Indo-West Pacific, from Japan south to Australia, west to Samoa and Tonga; along the east coast of Africa.

**Habitat:** Occasionally move onto reef flats

and lagoons during high tide but typically found in deeper water.

**Status:** Insufficient data to determine.

### Bluespotted ribbontail stingray

**Description:** Large, bright blue spots, along with blue side stripes along their tails, distinguish these rays. Maximum disc width is 14 inches.

**Range:** Indo-West Pacific including the Red Sea and east Africa to the Solomon Islands north to Japan; south to northern Australia.

**Habitat:** Shallow temperate and tropical waters, among coral reefs.

**Status:** Near threatened.

### Chilean round stingray

**Description:** Distinctive dark spots on a solid colored body, light colored belly. Maximum disc width of 16 inches.

**Range:** Central coast of Chile.

**Status:** Insufficient data to determine.

### Yellow stingray

**Description:** Yellow stingrays have round bodies. Their color schemes can vary but all have a pattern of white, yellow or golden spots on a dark green or brown background. Maximum disc width is 14 inches.

**Range:** Coastal waters of the western Atlantic from North Carolina to Florida and throughout the Gulf of Mexico.

**Habitat:** Shallow water in sandy or muddy areas, often buried in the substrate.

**Status:** Least concern

### Fun facts about stingrays

- **Yes, there is something ‘fishy’ about them.** They don’t look like what many people might consider a fish, but they are.
- **No bones about them:** Stingrays don’t have bones. Like their shark cousins, they are cartilaginous fish. Their bodies are supported by cartilage, just like the tip of a human nose.
- **Facing above – and below:** So just where is a stingray’s face? Well, it depends on how you look at it. The ray’s eyes are on top of its body, bulging out from its bulk, where it can see both prey and predators. Its nose, or nares, mouth and gill slits are on the underside of its body.
- **‘Birds’ of the sea:** Stingrays swim in the ocean, some of them even appearing to fly as their pectoral fins move like wings through the water.
- **Give them a beach – underwater:** Stingrays glide effortlessly through the water, but often are most at home buried in the sand, their bodies blending in to avoid predators.
- **Long lives ahead:** Stingrays are born alive and look just like mom – except in miniature. They can live more than a quarter of a century.
- **The big and the small:** Stingrays vary greatly in size. Some are no bigger than a hand; others are up to 6.5 feet wide and can weigh nearly 800 pounds.

- **A fingernail trim:** Clipping the barbs of stingrays for the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium Stingray Cove exhibit is much like trimming human fingernails, except the clippers are more like those used on dogs' toenails. Aquarists will clip the rays' barbs every few weeks.
- **Do the 'Stingray Shuffle:'** Stingrays use their barbs only as a defense; they are not naturally aggressive. Humans entering water where stingrays live should shuffle their feet as a warning to stingrays hidden in the sand. They'll move away.

#### **How humans can help stingrays**

- **Choose sustainable seafood:** Stingrays are often accidentally caught up in commercial operations fishing for other species, leading to death or injury of the rays. A Seafood Watch wallet card or Seafood Watch smart phone app can help people make responsible seafood choices. [www.seafoodwatch.org](http://www.seafoodwatch.org)
- **Pick pets carefully:** Some stingray populations are vulnerable to the home aquarium pet trade. A Reef Fish Guide can help people pick aquarium pets that keep fish populations and coral reefs healthy. [www.reefprotect.org](http://www.reefprotect.org).
- **Watch what goes into the water:** Anything humans put on the ground has the potential to wash into Puget Sound and harm people and wildlife. That includes pet waste, motor oil, and lawn chemicals. Puget Sound is connected to stingrays' habitat. Ways to help keep Puget Sound healthy can be found at [www.pugetsoundstartshere.org](http://www.pugetsoundstartshere.org).

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*Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo and aquarium, promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).*