

Thornback Ray

Raja clavata

Fish · Here all year · lays eggcases in spring



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A flat, diamond-shaped ray, mottled brown and grey above with a pale underside, and studded with strong curved thorns along the back and tail — the feature that names it and separates it from other local rays. Thornbacks live over sand, mud and gravel in the Solway and the Irish Sea, often in fairly shallow water.

BEHAVIOUR

Thornback rays lie half-buried and hunt crabs, shrimps and flatfish, detecting buried prey through electroreceptors — jelly-filled pores in the snout that pick up the faint electrical fields of living animals. Females lay tough oblong eggcases with a stiff horn at each corner, and these too wash up as mermaid's purses. They are slow-growing and late-maturing, which makes the species sensitive to fishing pressure.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Skates and rays (Rajidae)
SIZE	Commonly 60–90 cm across
UK STATUS	Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List; slow-growing and fishing-sensitive

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