

SOUTHERN STINGRAY

SCIENTIFIC CLASSIFICATION

Kingdom : Animalia
 Phylum : Chordata
 Class : Chondrichthyes
 Subclass : Elasmobranchii
 Superorder : Batoidea
 Order : Myliobatiformes
 Family : Dasyatidae
 Genus : *Hypanus*
 Species : *Hypanus americanus*

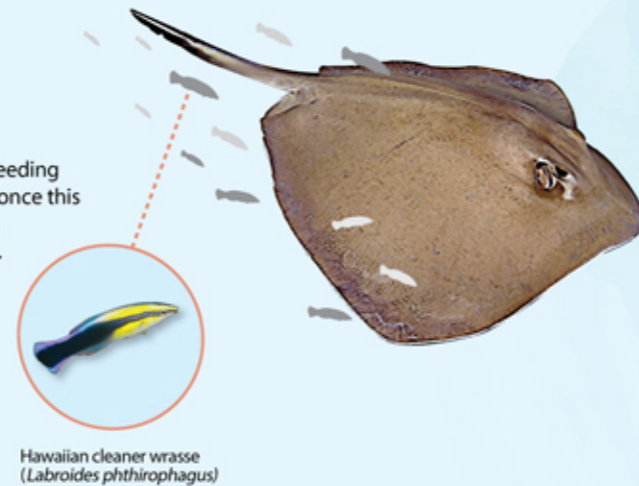
CONSERVATION STATUS

EX EW CR EN VU NT LC **DD**
 Extinct Endangered **Data Deficient**

Maximum Size
2.0 metres (disc width)
 Average size
0.9 metres (disc width)
 Maximum Weight
135.6 kilograms

REPRODUCTION

Like other rays, this species is ovoviviparous, with the embryos initially feeding on a yolk sac before receiving additional nourishment from the mother once this has been absorbed. The gestation period takes 4-11 months after which 2-10 pups are born measuring between 20-34 centimetres in disc width.



STINGING TAIL

The tail of the southern stingray is long and slender and possesses a serrated and venomous spine at its base. This spine is only used for defence but can inflict serious damage on potential predators, and painful injuries to humans who must be careful not to step on or disturb individuals hiding in the sand.

CLEANING STATIONS

Like other elasmobranchs, southern stingrays are susceptible to parasites and as a result are known to visit cleaning stations where they are attended by various cleaner wrasses. Visits to these sites are beneficial for both species, what is known as a symbiotic relationship.

DIET

Feeds on a large variety of prey including bivalves, shrimps, worms, fishes and crustaceans. By flapping their fins vigorously or spraying water from their mouth they are able to disturb the substrate and expose hidden prey. They continuously forage for food and will consume multiple different prey items in one day.



PREDATORS

Preyed upon by a variety of sharks and other large fishes. To avoid predators they will bury themselves in the sand and use their tail that contains venom for protection. Hammerheads often consume *Hypanus americanus* as they are able to detect the rays even when they are hiding and out of sight of other sharks.



GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

A coastal species found in the tropical and subtropical waters. Particularly abundant along the west coast of Florida.

Atlantic Ocean: From New Jersey (United States) to the south of Brazil, including the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean.

HABITAT

Found on sandy and silty bottoms around coral reefs, seagrass beds and lagoons where they more than often hide during the day, and forage for food at night. Can be seen individually, in pairs or less often in large groups.

TOURISM

In many parts of the Caribbean the southern stingray is of particular importance to ecotourism. Perhaps the most famous place to encounter this species is at "Stingray City" in Grand Cayman, where the rays are hand fed and every day hundreds of people enter the water to swim with them.



JAWS & TEETH

Has multiple rows of teeth that are fairly uniform in size except for smaller teeth near the corners of the mouth. These teeth have low conical cusps and are set in jaws strong enough to crush the shells of variety of benthic prey.

