

# SPOTTED EAGLE RAY

## SCIENTIFIC CLASSIFICATION

Kingdom : Animalia  
 Phylum : Chordata  
 Class : Chondrichthyes  
 Subclass : Elasmobranchii  
 Superorder : Batoidea  
 Order : Myliobatiformes  
 Family : Aetobatidae  
 Genus : Aetobatus  
 Species : *Aetobatus narinari*

## CONSERVATION STATUS

EX EW CR EN VU **NT** LC  
 Extinct Endangered **Near Threatened** Least Concern

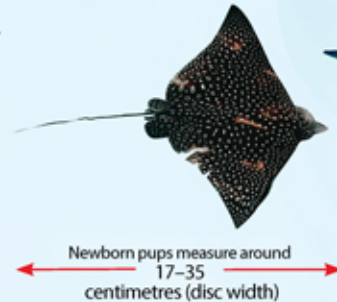
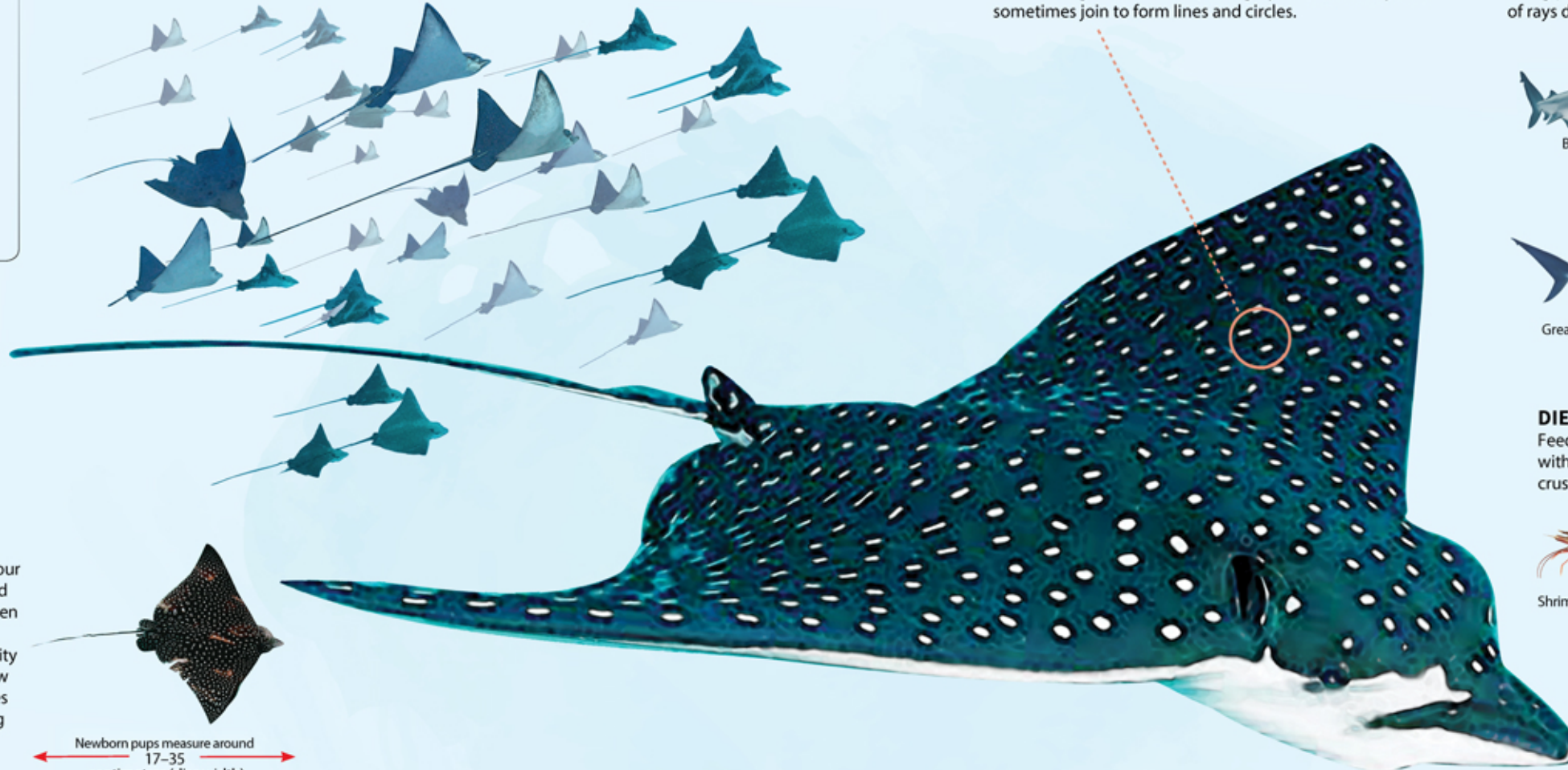
Maximum Size  
**3.3 metres (disc width)**  
 Average size  
**1.8 metres (disc width)**  
 Maximum Weight  
**230 kilograms**

## REPRODUCTION

As an ovoviparous species, the eggs develop and hatch inside the mother, who gives birth to between one and four pups after a gestation period of around 12 months. Each pup measures between 17 and 35 centimetres (disc width) at birth and does not reach sexual maturity until it is at least four years old. This low reproductive output means the species is particularly vulnerable to overfishing and other environmental factors.

## SCHOOLING BEHAVIOR

When travelling, spotted eagle rays will gather in large groups of up to several hundred individuals. A small group of rays, with occasional interactions between them, is known as a loose aggregation. A school is defined as six or more rays swimming in the same direction at the same speed.

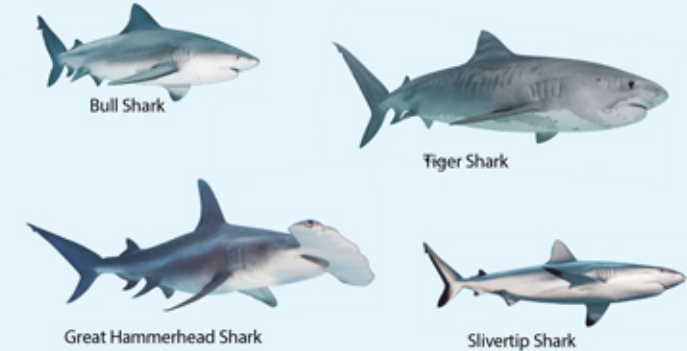


## COLORATION

Perhaps the most beautiful of all rays, it has a distinctive spotted pattern similar to a whale shark on its upper body that makes it easy to recognise. The small white spots stand out against the black, dark grey or brown body and sometimes join to form lines and circles.

## PREDATORS

Falls victim to various shark species such as silver tips, tiger sharks, bull sharks and great hammerheads, and has been observed leaping completely clear of the water when being pursued. Sharks have also been reported following groups of rays during the birthing season and feeding on newborn pups.



## DIET

Feeds mostly on molluscs that it removes from their shell with its powerful plate-like teeth. Also consumes shrimps, crustaceans, octopus, squid and bony fishes.



## GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Widespread in both tropical and temperate waters.

**Western Atlantic:** North Carolina, Florida, Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean and Bermuda South to Brazil.

**Eastern Atlantic:** Mauritania to Angola.

**Indo Pacific:** Red Sea and from South Africa to Hawaii as well as North to Japan and South to Australia.

**Eastern Pacific:** California South Puerto Pizarro, Peru including the Galapagos islands.

## HABITAT

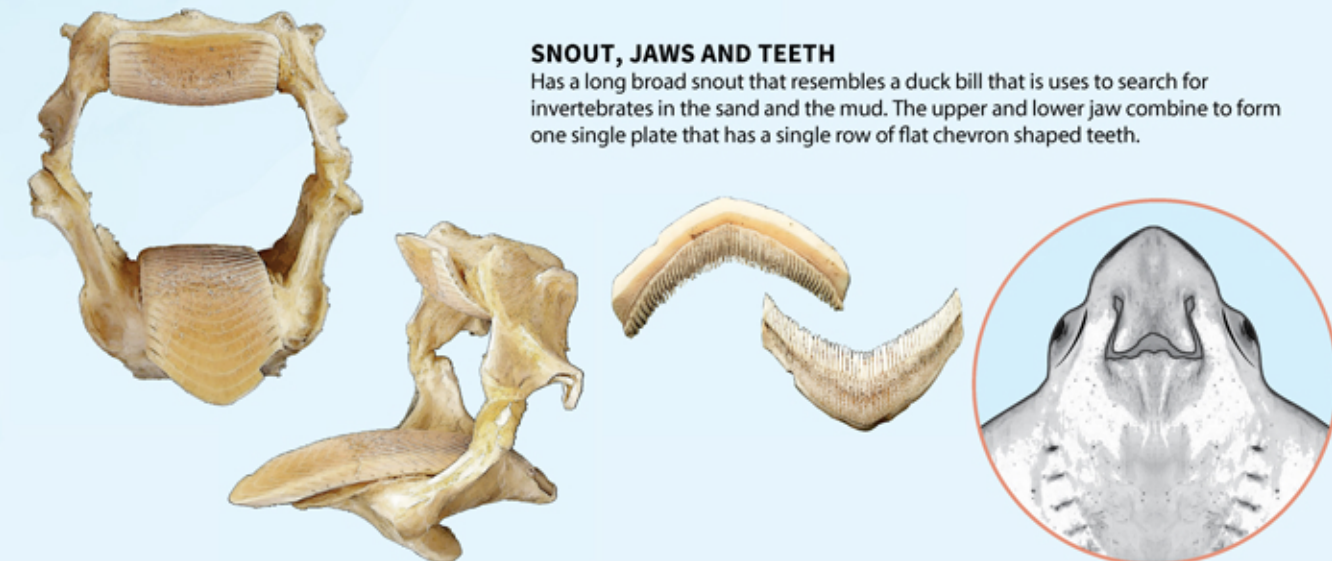
Commonly observed in bays and lagoons and often associated with coral-reef ecosystems down to depths of around 80 metres. When not foraging inshore they can be found in open water where they swim close to the surface in large groups. Capable of swimming long distances across ocean basins, although is known to show site fidelity over its lifetime.

## TOURISM

Sightings of the species are common in the Caribbean, Mexico, the Galapagos islands and the Maldives where it has been afforded protection due to its value to ecotourism. Individuals are generally shy and keep their distance from scuba divers, but their striking pattern and graceful movement make them a popular species to encounter in any dive destination.

## SNOUT, JAWS AND TEETH

Has a long broad snout that resembles a duck bill that is used to search for invertebrates in the sand and the mud. The upper and lower jaw combine to form one single plate that has a single row of flat chevron shaped teeth.



Area of distribution

