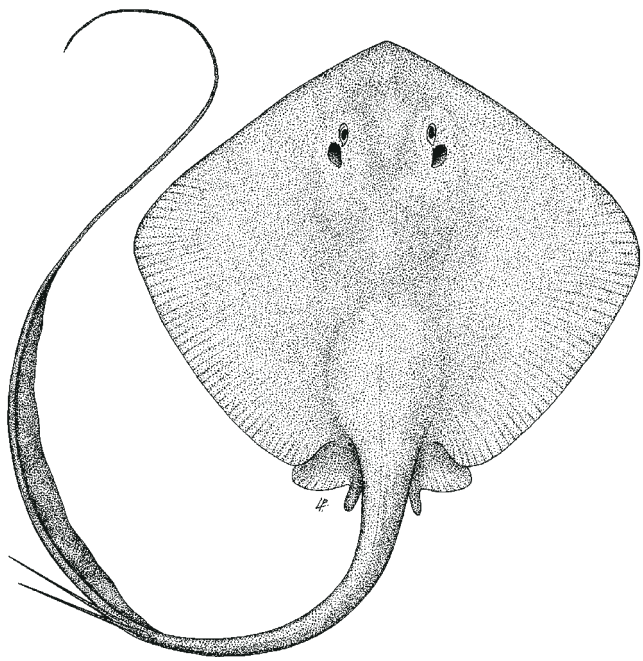
click for previous page

Pastinachus sephen (Forsskål, 1775)

Frequent synonyms / misidentifications: *Dasyatis gruveli* Chabanaud, 1923 / None.

FAO names: En - Cowtail stingray.

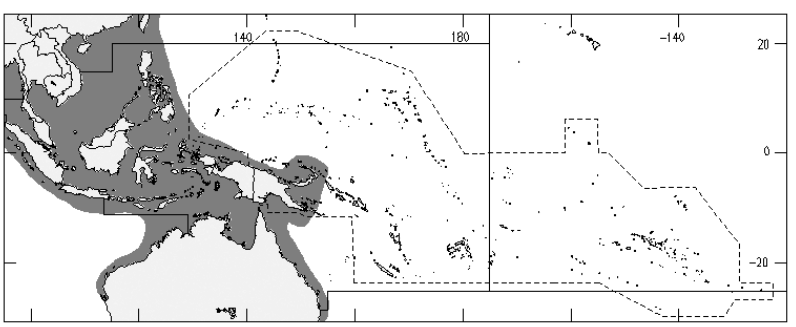


Diagnostic characters: Disc rhomboidal, trunk very thick, width about 1.1 to 1.3 times length; pectoral-fin apex broadly rounded (more so in juveniles); snout broadly rounded, tip blunt; anterior margin of disc almost straight to slightly convex. **Tail very broad-based, depressed**, tapering gradually to sting; slender and almost cylindrical behind sting; moderately elongate (length about twice disc width or less when undamaged); mostly with **1 sting located well behind pelvics; ventral cutaneous fold very well developed (several times taller than tail height above), terminating abruptly about 2 sting lengths behind sting tip, tip of tail filamentous; no dorsal skin fold**. Eyes very small, length of eye and spiracle about 1.6 in preorbital snout length; interorbital space very broad. Mouth very narrow, **5 papillae on floor;** labial furrows poorly developed; no lower labial folds, papillae minute; lower jaw truncate. Internasal flap narrow, moderately elongate and lobe-like, margin fine, papillae not obvious; nostrils short, narrow. Pelvic fins of moderate size, margins broadly rounded. Disc surface with broad band of very small denticles; band extending along mid-disc (beneath eyes), from near snout tip and onto upper surface of tail (only lateral extremity of disc smooth); early juveniles uniformly smooth, denticles developing rapidly after birth; about 4 blunt, pearl thorns on disc centre of juveniles (often indistinct in adults). **Colour: upper surface uniform, greyish brown to black; tail fold and tip black**; ventral surface mostly white.

Size: Maximum total length at least 300 cm; maximum disc width 180 cm.

Habitat, biology, and fisheries: Common inshore to a depth of 60 m or more in both coral and sedimentary habitats. Enters estuaries and recorded from fresh water. Marketed throughout its range in small to moderate quantities.

Distribution: Widespread in the tropical Indo-Pacific from the Red Sea, north to Japan, east to Australia, including Melanesia and Micronesia. Also reported from South Africa.

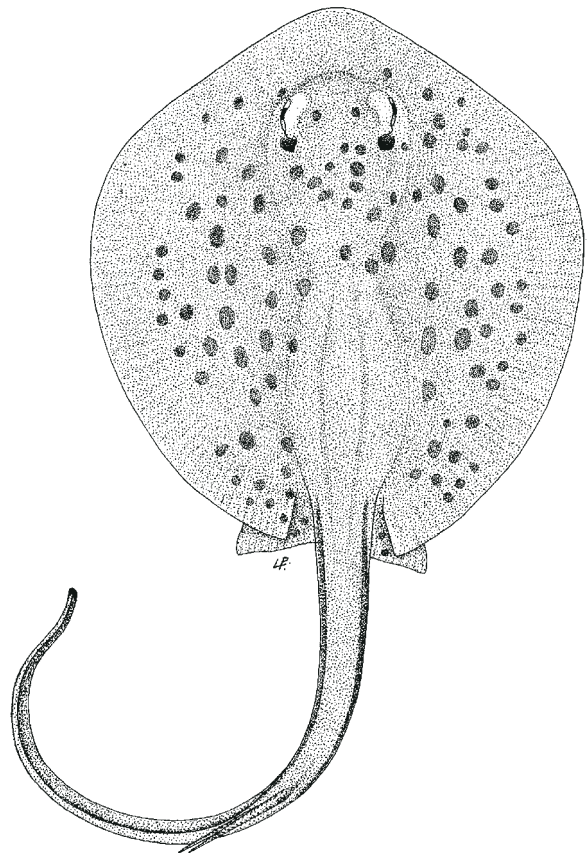


Taeniura lymma (Forsskål, 1775)

Frequent synonyms / misidentifications: None / None.

FAO names: En - Bluespotted fantail ray.

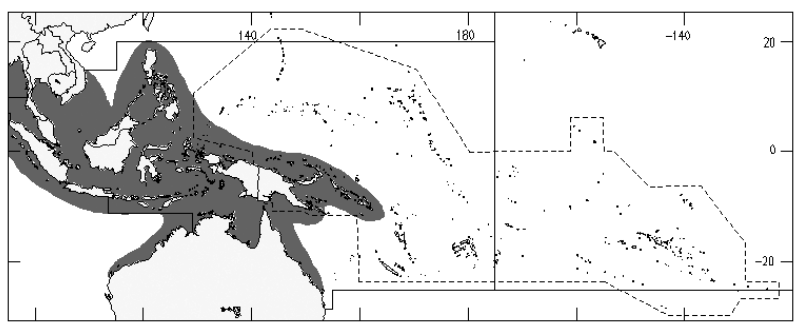
Diagnostic characters: Disc oval, trunk robust, width about 0.8 times length; snout bluntly rounded, tip not pointed; anterior margin slightly convex. **Tail rather broad-based, depressed, relatively short** (about 1.5 times disc width when undamaged); tapering rapidly to sting, slightly compressed beyond sting; mostly with 2 **stings located well behind pelvics; ventral cutaneous fold deep, long, extending to tail tip; dorsal midline with very low fleshy ridge**. Eyes moderately large, length of eye and spiracle about 1/2 preorbital snout length; interorbital space narrow. Mouth small, **2 large central papillae on floor**; labial furrows deep, lower lip and internasal flap with prominent papillae. Internasal flap narrow, elongate; posterior margin deeply concave with prominent fringe; lower jaw slightly concave near symphysis; nostrils slender, narrow. Pelvic fins moderately elongate, slender. **Disc smooth, except for patch of small, widely spaced thorns in nuchal area**; sometimes with a short row posteriorly. **Colour: dorsal surface brownish or yellowish brown with large blue spots (some almost 1/2 eye diameter); tail without spots, usually with long midlateral blue stripes before sting, bluish posteriorly;** ventral surface mostly uniformly white.



Size: Maximum total length about 70 cm; maximum disc width 30 cm.

Habitat, biology, and fisheries: Possibly the most abundant stingray found in coral reef habitats of the area. Inshore, mostly occurring shallower than 20 m. Molluscs, worms, shrimps, and crabs are major prey items. Feeds over shallow sandy flats during the rising tide then disperses on the falling tide to seek shelter in caves and under ledges. Important commercial species taken mainly by traditional fishermen.

Distribution: Widespread in the Indo-West Pacific, from southern Africa to the Solomon Islands (including the Red Sea). Not recorded from the Japanese Archipelago or Taiwan Province of China.

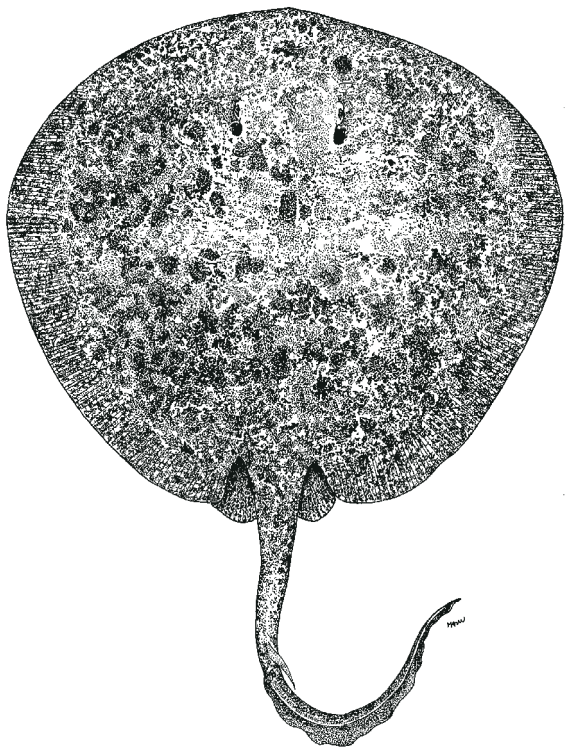


Taeniura meyeni Müller and Henle, 1841

Frequent synonyms / misidentifications: *Taeniura melanospilos* Bleeker, 1853 / None.

FAO names: En - Blotched fantail ray.

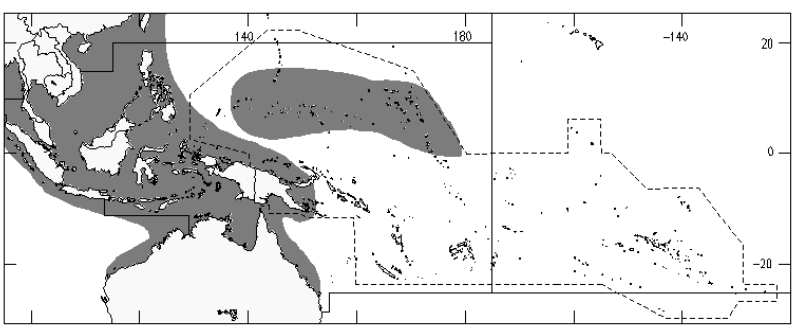
Diagnostic characters: Disc subcircular, trunk robust; slightly wider than long; margin of disc uniformly convex, tip not pointed. **Tail relatively broad-based, depressed**, tapering rapidly at sting, slender and compressed beyond sting; **short** (length slightly longer than disc width when undamaged); generally with 1 sting; **ventral cutaneous fold prominent, extending to tail tip, several times deeper than tail above**; **dorsal fold absent**. Eye size moderate, length of eye and spiracle about 1/2 to 1/3 preorbital snout length; interorbital space broad. Mouth moderately broad, **7 short papillae on floor (5 centrally);** labial furrows and folds weakly developed. Internasal flap short, very broad, papillae absent, margin with short fringe; lower jaw uniformly convex; nostrils large, oval. Pelvic fins small, elongate. **Disc surface covered uniformly with short, widely-spaced granulations; no thorns**. **Colour: dorsal surface mottled, black and white (sometimes brownish)**; ventral surface of disc uniformly pale; tail uniformly black behind sting; margins and undersurface of tail greyish brown to black.



Size: Maximum total length at least 330 cm; maximum disc width 180 cm.

Habitat, biology, and fisheries: Large stingray in coral reef habitats; also offshore on soft bottoms down to 439 m. Little is known of its biology. Significant food species because of its size but taken only infrequently.

Distribution: Indo-Pacific from the Red Sea to tropical Australia, including the Japanese Archipelago, Lord Howe Island and Micronesia. Also East African coast south to Madagascar and eastern Cape coast of South Africa.

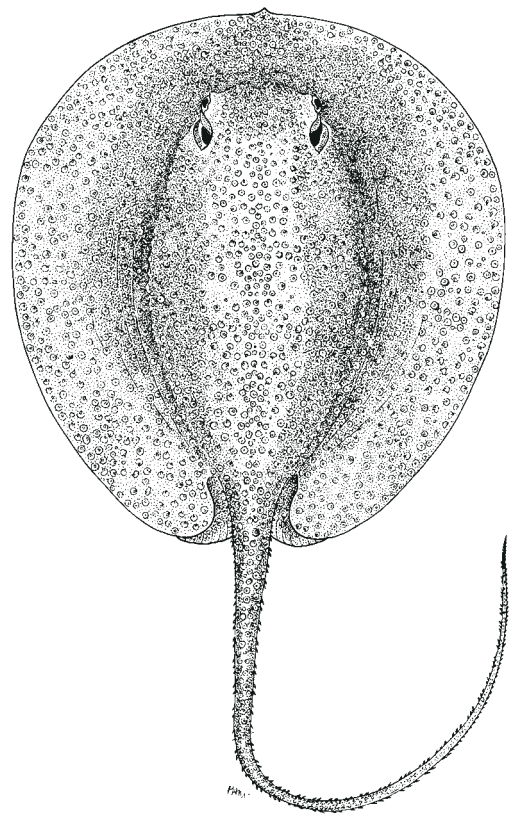


Urogymnus asperrimus (Bloch and Schneider, 1801)

Frequent synonyms / misidentifications: *Urogymnus africanus* (Bloch and Schneider, 1801) / None.

FAO names: En - Porcupine ray.

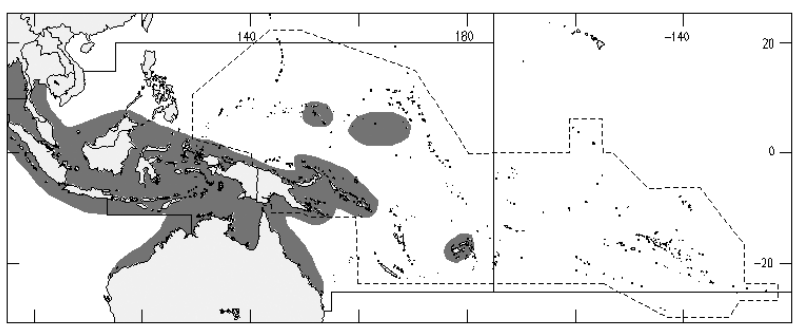
Diagnostic characters: Disc oval, trunk very robust; slightly longer than wide; snout tip blunt. Tail about equal to disc length, almost cylindrical in cross-section, tapering rapidly from base; **no stinging spine or cutaneous folds**. Eyes small, length of eye and spiracle 1.5 to 2 in preorbital snout length. Mouth narrow, **3 to 5 papillae on floor;** labial furrows and papillae prominent. Internasal flap skirt-shaped, papillate, margin with prominent fringe; nostrils elongate, narrow. Pelvic fins small, slender. **Upper disc of adults extremely prickly with large, spiny thorns scattered widely over entire surface; smaller, flat, plate-like denticles confined in dense patch on raised central part of disc and on tail (no enlarged thorns in small specimens); no outsized scapular thorns**. **Colour:** uniform dark brown to greyish above, white below; tail tip dark.



Size: Maximum total length at least 220 cm; maximum disc width about 100 cm.

Habitat, biology, and fisheries: Little-known inshore ray. Found on sand and coral rubble habitats near reefs. Difficult to handle so probably of limited commercial value.

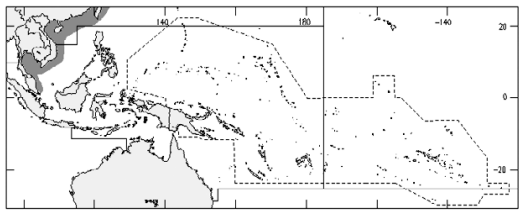
Distribution: Widespread in the western Pacific and Indian Oceans from kwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) to Fiji (apparently not found in Japanese Archipelago). Also in the tropical eastern Atlantic, off central Africa.

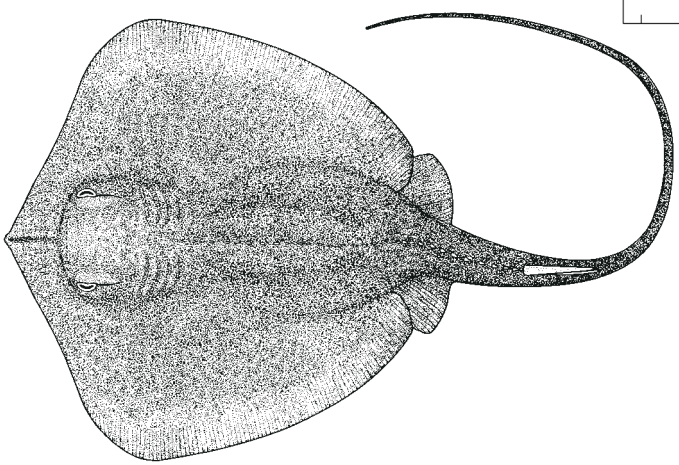


Dasyatis akajei Müller and Henle, 1841

En - Red stingray.

Maximum total length at least 138 cm and disc width of 66 cm. Continental shelf. Feeds primarily on small fishes and crustacea. Caught in commercial quantities in the Gulf of Thailand. Tropical northwestern Pacific from Thailand north to southern Japan.

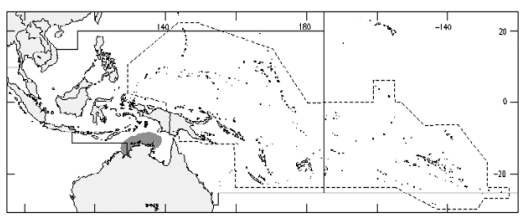


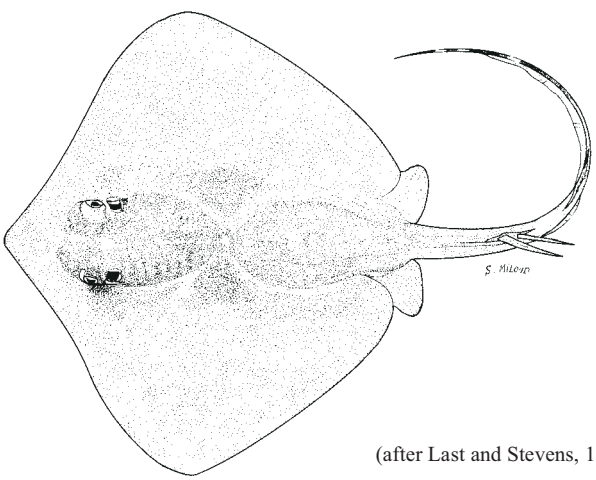


Dasyatis annotata Last, 1987

En - Plain maskray.

Maximum total length at least 45 cm; maximum disc width 24 cm. Continental shelf from depths of 10 to 60 m. Little known of its biology. Not caught commercially. Off northern Australia in the Arafura and Timor seas.



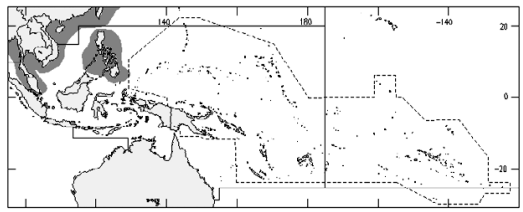


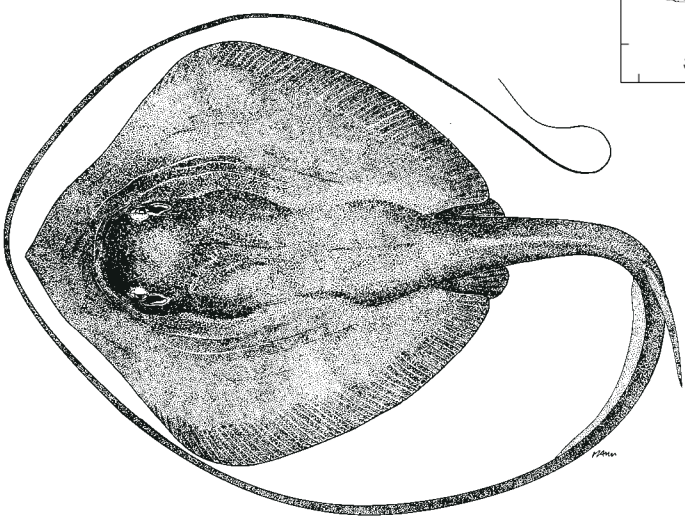
(after Last and Stevens, 1994)

Dasyatis bennetti (Müller and Henle, 1841)

En - Bennett's stingray.

Maximum total length at least 130 cm; maximum disc width about 50 cm. Limited value to fisheries. Distribution or biology not well known; probably Indo-West Pacific from southern Japan to India, including the Philippines, but most abundant in northwestern Pacific.

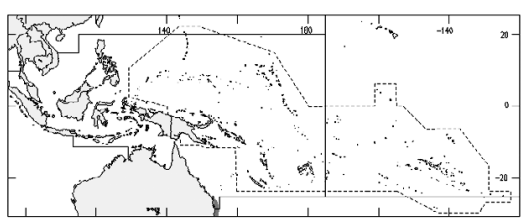


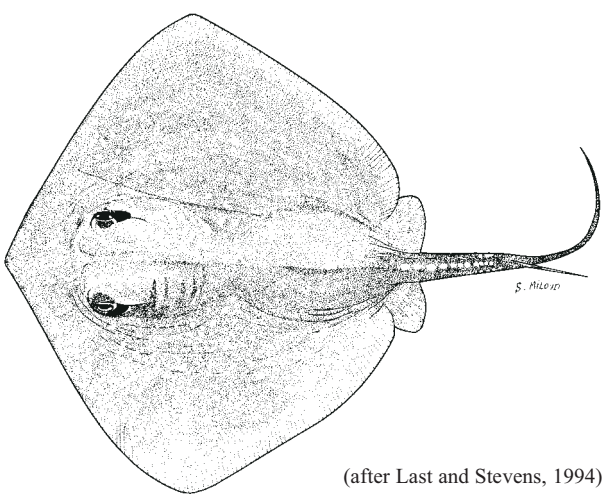


Dasyatis brevicaudata (Hutton, 1875)

En - Smooth stingray.

Maximum total length at least 430 cm; maximum disc width 210 cm. Continental shelf to depths of at least 100 m. Largest stingray, little known of its biology. Not caught commercially. South Africa, India, New Zealand, and temperate and subtropical coasts of Australia. Accounts of this species from Thailand may be of the closely related *Dasyatis matsubarai*.



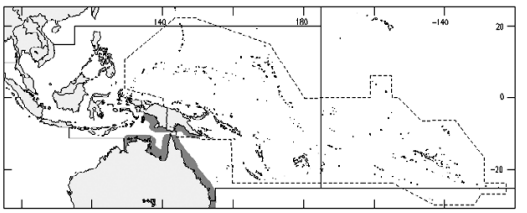


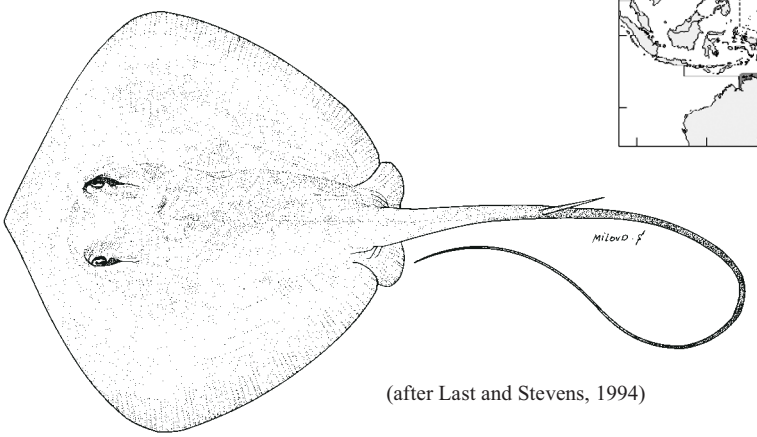
(after Last and Stevens, 1994)

Dasyatis fluviorum Ogilby, 1908

En - Estuary stingray.

Maximum total length at least 130 cm; maximum disc width about 46 cm. Coastal in mangrove swamps and estuaries. Little known of its biology. Not caught commercially. Northern and eastern tropical Australia, and New Guinea.



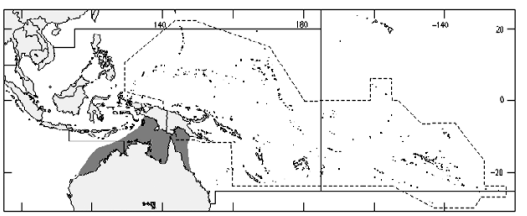


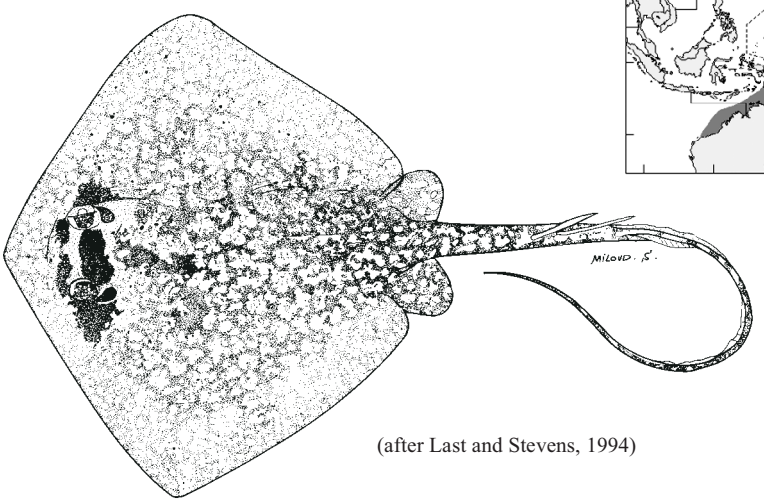
(after Last and Stevens, 1994)

Dasyatis leylandi Last, 1987

En - Painted maskray.

Maximum total length at least 53 cm; maximum disc width 25 cm. Continental shelf from depths of 5 to 80 m. Little known of its biology. Exists as 2 colour forms. Not caught commercially. Northern Australia and New Guinea, including the Arafura and Timor seas.





(after Last and Stevens, 1994)

click for next page