

*THORNBACk-RAY, RAJA CLAVATA LINNAEUS*

The thornback-ray is a demersal predator, feeding on anchovy, horse mackerel, whiting and sprat. Crustaceans are also a major component of its diet although it occasionally also feeds on worms. It is a food competitor with spiny dogfish, turbot, sturgeons, gobies and sting-rays.

Commercially the thornback ray is of secondary importance. It makes up to some extent the Turkish fishery and also appears as a by-catch in the fishery of Ukraine and Russia (Table 93).

TABLE 93. Ray and skate catches in the Black Sea during 1967-1992 (in tonnes)

Year	former USSR	Turkey	Total	Year	former USSR	Turkey	Total
1967	-	1682.6		1980	1100.0	2068.5	3168.5
1968	-	1720.6		1981	1000.0	1147.0	2147.0
1969	-	1512.7		1982	1400.0	1554.0	2954.0
1970	-	835.9		1983	1000.0	3078.0	4078.0
1971	-	2149.4		1984	1200.0	904.0	2104.0
1972	-	1193.3		1985	1100.0	1087.0	2187.0
1973	-	290.3		1986	900.0	797.0	1697.0
1974	-	238.0		1987	400.0	880.0	1280.0
1975	-	51.7		1988	400.0	974.0	1374.0
1976	1200.0	118.9	1318.9	1989	700.0	1254.0	1954.0
1977	1000.0	256.4	1256.4	1990	400.0	633.0	1033.0
1978	1200.0	997.9	2197.9	1991	300.0	778.0	1078.0
1979	1100.0	3390.0	4490.0	1992	100.0	1155.0	1255.0

It is seen from the above Table that the mean Turkish catch (1 239.6 tonnes) represent 59.24% of the mean total catch (2 092.5 tonnes). That of the former USSR is 852.9 tonnes - (40.76%).

It is fished by passive coastal gears as a sizeable by-catch in April-May and in August-September along the south-western Crimean coast, in the north-eastern part of the Black Sea and off the north Caucasian coast.

Early in 1990, the thornback-ray biomass was estimated at 6 000 tonnes. The assessed optimum catch of 1 000 tonnes has been approached for the Ukrainian fishery.