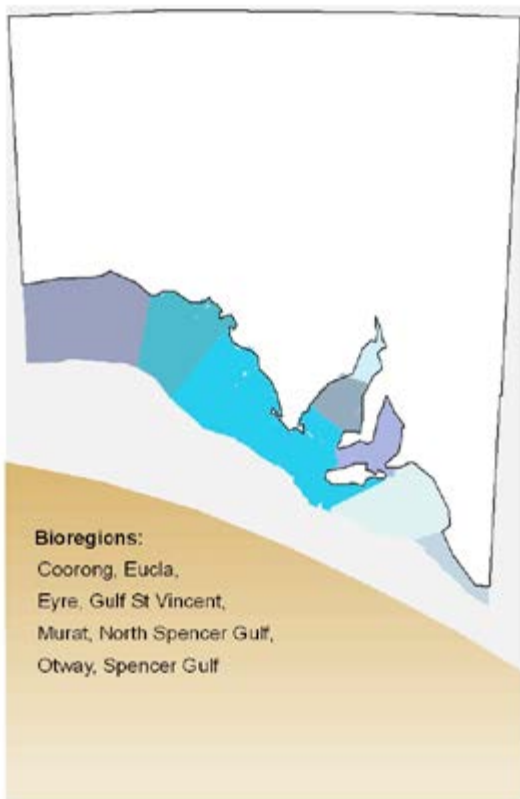


Southern Eagle Ray

Myliobatis australis



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.

Southern Eagle Rays belong to the same class as sharks and other rays (Chondrichthyes) which all have skeletons made of cartilage instead of bone. A distinctive feature of the Southern Eagle Ray is their blunt snout. Their bodies are wider than they are long with pointed tips and eyes on the side of their heads. Nostrils and an internasal flap (this is a fleshy flap of skin between the nostrils that partly covers the mouth) are on their underside. They have three types of fins, and the small dorsal fin at the beginning of the tail is followed by a venomous stinging spine.

They are large animals, which can measure a total length of up to three metres and can weigh more than 50 kilograms. They have smooth skin without the thorns on their bodies that some other ray species possess.

Diet

They eat small fish and crustaceans such as crabs and molluscs as well as annelid worms. To make feeding easier their mouths are located on the underside of their bodies, with small plate-like teeth for grinding food.

Breeding

Southern Eagle Rays are viviparous (they give birth to live young). They have an average litter size of six but can have 2–15 babies at a time. Young are born in summer.

Habitat

These animals are found only in Southern Australia from Jurien Bay in Western Australia to Moreton Bay in Southern Queensland. The adults migrate south in the warmest months of the year. They are bottom-dwellers and are so flat they can cover themselves with sand at the bottom of the ocean for camouflage. It is partly for this reason that they prefer the shallow water near beaches and shoals and over sand-flats as habitat.

Threats

The Southern Eagle Ray is a common bycatch of commercial and recreational fishers. Unfortunately Southern Eagle Rays are increasingly kept and marketed for their flesh rather than being returned to the ocean. Marine pollution is another threat to this species, possibly leaving it with less food to eat. Currently they are classified as Near Threatened on the IUCN redlist.



Southern Eagle Rays have a pair of openings just behind the eyes called 'spiracles' that allow them to draw in oxygenated water from above. This helps them to breathe even when they are lying flat on the ocean floor!

Conservation

You can help the Southern Eagle Ray by:

- putting rubbish in its place as litter makes its way to the ocean from everywhere
- bringing a bag along for collecting rubbish when you go for a walk along the beach
- not polluting – anything washed down a storm-water drain goes straight out to sea.
- letting it go if you catch one.



Photo© MLSSA

Southern Eagle Ray

For further information

Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

Eastwood: (08) 8273 9100

Gawler: (08) 8523 7700

Lobethal: (08) 8389 5900

Willunga: (08) 8550 3400

Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

Northern Adelaide: (08) 8406 8289

Barossa: (08) 8563 8436

Central Adelaide: (08) 8234 7255

Southern Adelaide: (08) 8384 0176

Southern Fleurieu: (08) 8551 0524

