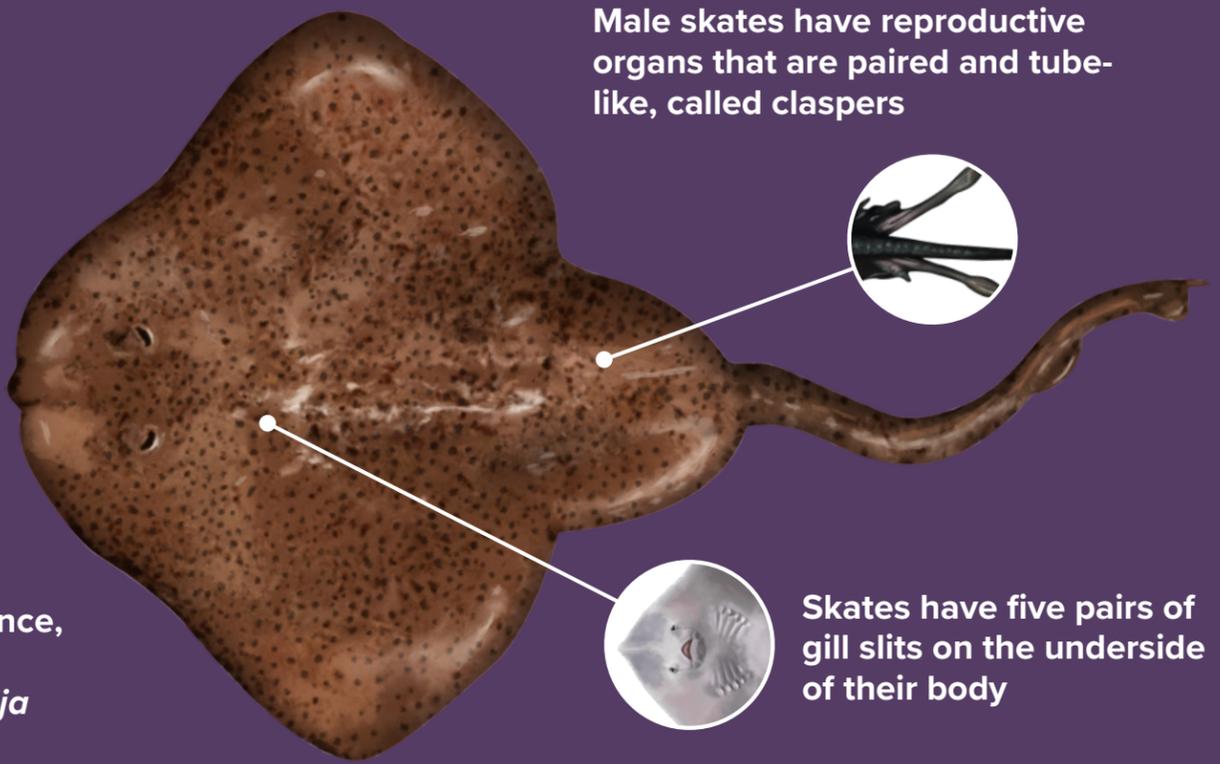


Skates

Skates are easily distinguished from other fish by their disc-shaped flat bodies.

Their body shape allows them to live on or near the ocean floor, where they bury themselves to ambush prey and avoid predators.

Skates found in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Canada: the Winter Skate (*Leucoraja ocellata*), the Thorny Skate (*Amblyraja radiata*), and the Smooth Skate (*Malacoraja senta*).



Male skates have reproductive organs that are paired and tube-like, called claspers

Skates have five pairs of gill slits on the underside of their body

Adults can reach a maximum size of over one metre in length



WINTER SKATE

- One of the larger species of skate in Canada.
- Has a light brown back with varying numbers of blackish spots, and a white belly.
- Winter skates are usually found on sand or gravel bottoms.



THORNY SKATE

- Has a row of large thorns running along the midline to the first dorsal fin.
- Brown, occasionally with darker brown spots on their back, and white on their belly.
- Lives over hard and soft bottoms, and is found mainly offshore.



SMOOTH SKATE

- Back is pale brown with faint darker spots, and the belly is white, often with dusky spots.
- The Smooth Skate lives on clay, silt or soft sand bottoms predominantly in deep troughs and basins.

QUICK FACTS

- Skates, along with sharks and rays are cartilaginous fish, meaning they have a skeleton made of cartilage rather than bone
- There are over 500 species of skates and rays worldwide, with 16+ species in Atlantic Canada waters
- Skates lay egg cases, sometimes called 'mermaid's purses', that are leathery and have 4 'hooks' to anchor to seaweed or other objects on the ocean floor



DIET

Skates of the northwest Atlantic are carnivorous, meaning they eat meat. They feed on worms, mollusks, and crabs.



THREATS

In Canada, the biggest threats to skates are incidental bycatch and natural mortality.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Some skate populations are getting smaller. They need your help! Put them back in the water quickly if you catch them, so they can keep swimming.



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