

# GEORGIA AQUARIUM ANIMAL FACT SHEET

## Spotted Eagle Ray *Aetobatus narinari*

### Range/Habitat

- The spotted eagle ray is distributed widely across the Indo-Pacific and eastern and western Atlantic in tropical and warm temperate waters.
- It occurs over the continental shelf from the surface to about 262 feet (80 m) in depth primarily in coastal environments such as bays and coral reefs. This ray also will sometimes enter estuaries and may cross ocean basins.

### Physical Characteristics

- The spotted eagle ray has a distinctive pattern of small whitish spots across the back, which is black, dark gray or bluish in color. The ventral surface is white. Its smooth skin lacks denticles or thorns.
- Its body, or disc, is very angular and thick, with a broad snout that is flat and rounded like a duck's bill. There are large spiracles located directly behind the eye.
- The wing-like pectoral fins are broad with pointed tips.
- This ray has a long whip-like tail reaching lengths of 2½ to 3 times the width of the disc. There are 2 to 6 barbed spines at the base of the tail.
- It has a single row of broad, flat teeth in each jaw that combine to form upper and lower plates for crushing its shelled prey.
- The spotted eagle ray can reach a width of almost 11 feet (330 cm) and a total length of 29 feet (880 cm), including an undamaged tail.
- It can weigh up to 507 lbs. (230 kg).

### Diet/Feeding

- This ray feeds on a wide variety of benthic animals: worms, bivalve and gastropod molluscs, cephalopods, crustaceans and fish. Fish are important prey for adults.
- It uses its snout to probe in mud for benthic invertebrates.

### Conservation Status

- The spotted eagle ray is categorized as “near threatened” on the IUCN Red List.

### Additional Information

- The spotted eagle ray is ovoviviparous with the female giving birth to 2 to 4 pups after a gestation period believed to last about one year.
- The pups are about 7 to 14 inches (17 to 35 cm) in disc width at birth.
- This ray frequently forms large schools during the non-breeding season.
- It prefers to swim either near the surface or close to the bottom and will leap completely out of the water if pursued.
- This species is fished commercially for meat and cartilage in some locations, particularly in Southeast Asia, where populations are declining more than in other areas.
- It is also taken as by-catch throughout much of its range.
- Its tail is used as a decorative item.
- There is a row of 6 or 7 papillae (small projections) on the roof and floor of the mouth behind the teeth that are believed to separate shells from prey prior to ingestion.

- Scientists are reevaluating the taxonomy of the spotted eagle ray because they suspect that as many as four distinct species may exist, not just one.

**Sources**

[www.fishbase.net](http://www.fishbase.net)

[www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/Gallery/Descript/SERay/SERay.html](http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/Gallery/Descript/SERay/SERay.html)

<http://marinebio.org/species.asp?id=58>

[www.iucnredlist.org/details/39415](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/39415)