

WHAT'S THE SCOOP?



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WHITESPOTTED WEDGEFISH



This species has a flattened body, but unlike many other rays, it relies on its shark-like tail for propulsion. As a result, this species and its relatives were often termed sharkrays or guitarfish. The white spots give this species its full common name, but this spotting is highly variable. It spends much of its day on the sand and is able to ingest water through its two spiracles, situated behind each eye on the top of the head. The spiracles are modified gill slits. The teeth in both jaws are flattened to form a pavement for breaking the strong shells of mollusc prey. Small fish, polychaetes, squid and crustaceans are also eaten. This species is prized for its flesh and extremely large fins which carry the highest value in the shark fin trade market (Qun Chi - King of Shark Fins).

Inshore shark but occurs on the continental shelf to 70m (generally 35m). Off KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) South Africa, it occurs mainly off sandy beaches during summer, where it is especially abundant in the surf zone but does occur along the edges of deeper reefs down to 30m. Reproduction is ovoviparous, producing four young. Recently listed as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List.

Scientific Name:	<i>Rhynchobatus djiddensis</i>
AKA:	Whitespotted Wedgefish (formerly Giant Guitarfish)
Ocean Hang out:	Indian; Resting on or swimming over the seabed
Warm/Cool Waters:	Favours warmer water
Diet:	Small fish and shellfish (crustaceans and molluscs)
Slow/ Fast:	Slow, spends most of its time resting on the sand
S/ M/ L/ XL/ XXL:	L
Shy/ Bold:	Shy
At the beach/ In the sea: (Inhabits coastal or oceanic waters)	Coastal, common inshore
Local/ International: (Endemic/ Non-native)	International, widely distributed in the Western Indian Ocean
Nomadic/ Homely: (Migratory or resident)	Nomadic
Social/ Anti-social: (Normally found in groups or solitary)	Social; Common and often in packs
Black Tie/ Eccentric: (Easily recognisable as a shark or ray or has a unique appearance)	Eccentric
Teeth:	Small and flattened with a crushing effect
Best Feature:	A ray that looks like a shark
Red Listing:	Critically Endangered (2019)