

# GIANT STINGAREES

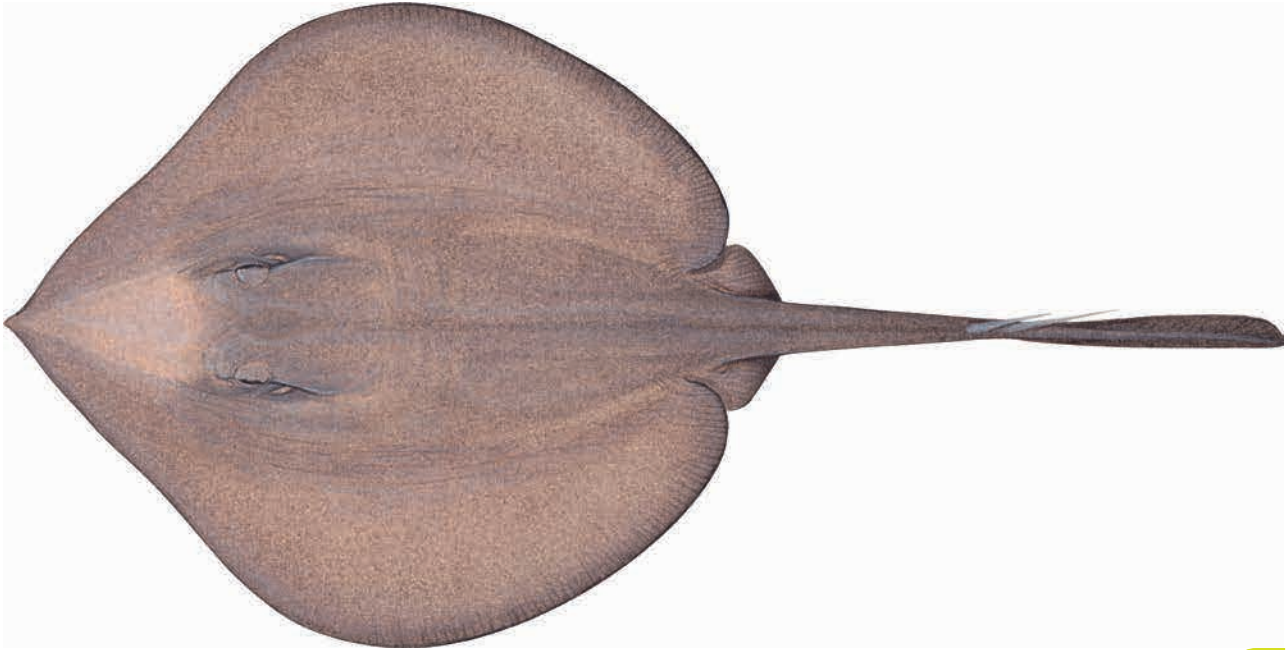
## Family Plesiobatidae

B. Séret & P.R. Last

Giant stingarees are large rays (adults to 2.7 m TL and 1.3 m DW) with an ovoid disc, and a tail armed with a strong venomous caudal sting. Like stingarees (Urolophidae), round stingrays (Urotrygonidae) and sixgill stingrays (Hexatrygonidae), they have a well-developed caudal fin at the end of the tail consisting of long-based upper and lower lobes. Their body is heavy and flabby, and the skin is densely covered with small denticles. The triangular snout is long, broad and flattened, and five pairs of short gill slits are located on the ventral head. The tail is rather long and slender, and the caudal fin is more elongate than in most other rays. Small eyes are positioned almost laterally on head, very close to small spiracles. Mouth rather large, not highly protractile. Nostrils are well separated with nasal flaps fused to form a broad nasal curtain that does not overlap the mouth. Viviparous (histotrophic). The family includes only a single species whose known distribution is patchy in deep waters of the Indo–Pacific. Despite its widespread distribution, the giant stingaree is captured infrequently, although it has been reported as common in some areas.

## GIANT STINGAREE

28.1

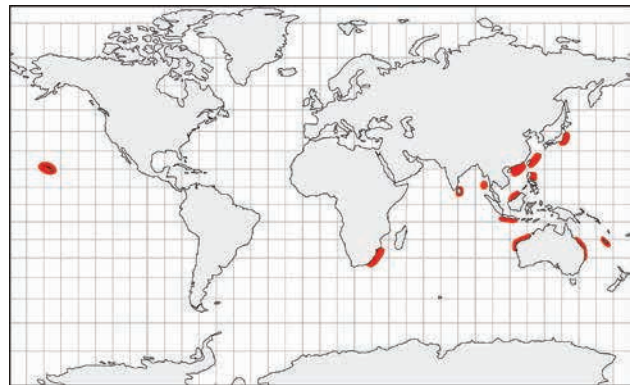
*Plesiobatis daviesi* (Wallace, 1967)

LC

**IDENTIFICATION.** Giant stingaree with a soft, rounded-oval disc, broadly triangular and pointed snout, long-based caudal fin, and skin much darker on dorsal surface than undersurface. Disc subcircular in young, becoming oval in adults; depressed, thickened slightly through abdomen but greatly flattened around its outer half. Snout flexible, without rostral cartilage, supported only by anterior pectoral radials; small lobe present at tip. Tail narrow based, slender (but not whip-like), shorter than disc, and usually with a strong caudal sting; caudal fin elongate and slender, base about half length of tail. Eyes small, orbit length up to 6 times in snout length. Nostrils expanded, subcircular. Nasal curtain broad and short, falling well short of mouth, posterior margin finely fringed. Mouth large without oral papillae. Teeth small, with rounded crown and short cusps. Upper disc and tail densely covered with small denticles, even in small specimens; undersurface of disc smooth.

**COLOUR.** Dorsal surface greyish, purplish or reddish brown, becoming darker in preserved specimens. Tail dark brownish to black on all surfaces; caudal fin black. Ventral surface white, with narrow dark margins (most pronounced on hind disc and tips of pelvic fins); claspers usually with white bases and dark tips.

**SIZE.** Attains 270 cm TL and 42 kg. Males mature at ~130–172 cm TL and females at ~189–200 cm TL; born at ~50 cm TL.



**HABITAT AND BIOLOGY.** Indo-Pacific; South Africa to Hawaii (USA), known distribution patchy. Deepwater, benthic on soft bottoms of upper continental and insular slopes mainly at 275–680 m depths, rarely venturing onto continental shelves. Feeds on small fishes, crabs, shrimps and cephalopods.

**SIMILAR SPECIES.** Stingarees of the family Urolophidae are much smaller, have a shorter snout and mostly have a smooth upper disc. Genetic analyses have shown that these two families are closely related.

Séret Bernard, Last P.R.

Giant stingarees : family Plesiobatidae.

In : Last P.R. (ed.), White W.T. (ed.), de Carvalho M.R. (ed.), Séret Bernard (ed.), Stehmann M.F.W. (ed.), Naylor G.J.P. (ed.), Marshall L. (ill.). Rays of the world.

Clayton South : CSIRO, 2016, p. 674-675.

ISBN 978-0-643-10913-1