

WILDLIFE



GUIDE

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NOTE TO USERS

The information and guidance relating to sensitive bycaught animals in this guide is correct as of 2024, and could be subject to change.

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WHAT IS THE WILDLIFE IDENTIFICATION GUIDE?

This Wildlife Identification (ID) Guide is designed to help fishermen recognise and correctly identify a wide range of species commonly found in UK waters.

It is a tool that will equip fishermen with the information they need to quickly identify species that may be observed at sea or caught as bycatch (the unintended capture or entanglement of non-target species in fishing gear).



WHO IS IT FOR?

The guide is intended to support active UK fishermen, providing an informative and easy to use guide that can be kept in wheelhouses and used to support species identification when on the water. The information in the guide can be read and understood at a quick glance, making it particularly handy for fishermen working at sea.



HOW TO USE THE GUIDE:

The guide is structured into seven chapters. Each chapter deals with a specific animal group and lists the most common UK species within each group, and their distinguishing features.

By referring to the information in this guide, you will be able to:

Learn how to identify marine wildlife found in the UK, and recognise species which may be accidentally caught in fishing gear (bycatch).

- Visually similar species

This symbol is used throughout the guide to identify any species that may appear visually similar to the eye. Further guidance is provided to help ID the species in question.

- Additional information icon

IN THE EVENT OF AN INCIDENT:

REPORT A BYCATCH INCIDENT

Discover which bycaught species are **voluntary** and which are **compulsory** to report.

C - **Compulsory** species are marked by the 'C' icon.

V - **Voluntary** species are marked by the 'V' icon.

Report a bycatch incident by following the corresponding QR code on page 39 and 40.

MARK AND NOTE

Once identified, mark the bycaught species with an 'X'.

This will be helpful to refer back to for reporting and may be useful to remember in the future for personal reference.

Further notes, including species, date, time and location can be made in the notes section at the back of the booklet from page 41 onwards.



! **FAO CODES:**

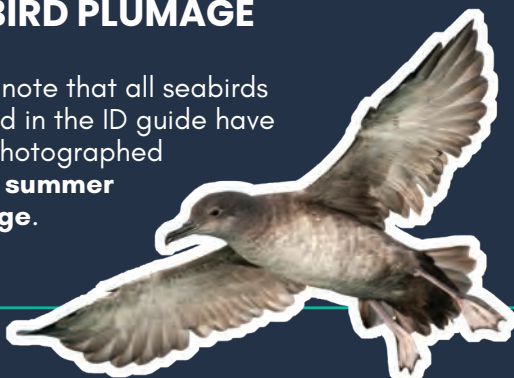
All incidents of incidental mortality and injury (bycatch) of marine mammals must be reported to the MMO within forty eight hours of the end of the fishing trip as required by the licence condition. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) provides a unique 3-letter code to identify marine animals to streamline the reporting process of bycatch incidents. Find the FAO code for each marine mammal next to their description.

C - The following species are **Compulsory** to report.

Bottlenose dolphin - DBO
Short-beaked common dolphin - DCO
Harbour porpoise - PHR
Long-finned pilot whale - PIW
Risso's dolphin - DRR
Striped dolphin - DST
White-beaked dolphin - BWD
Atlantic white-sided dolphin - DWH
Common (Harbour) seal - SEC
Grey seal - SEG

SEABIRD PLUMAGE

Please note that all seabirds pictured in the ID guide have been photographed in their **summer plumage**.



Seabirds that appear distinctively different in their **winter plumage** (January - March) will have a winter plumage icon paired next to them with further guidance to help ID the species.

W  - **Winter plumage**

Image credit: ©Luis Quinta/naturepl.com

DOLPHINS AND PORPOISES

The dolphins and porpoises present across UK waters can be distinguished through size, colour, dorsal fin shape, and the presence of a 'beak' – a long, protruding mouth. When identifying these marine mammals, it's important to note that they can be heavily scarred, with some individuals sporting long white marks across much of their body.



Bottlenose dolphin



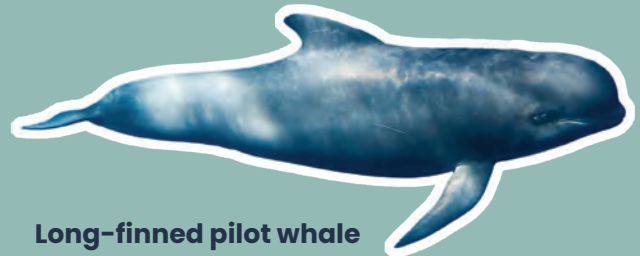
Harbour porpoise



White-beaked dolphin



Atlantic white-sided dolphin



Long-finned pilot whale



Striped dolphin



Short-beaked common dolphin



Risso's dolphin

Mark with a cross to identify and recall previously caught species. Make a note on page 41.

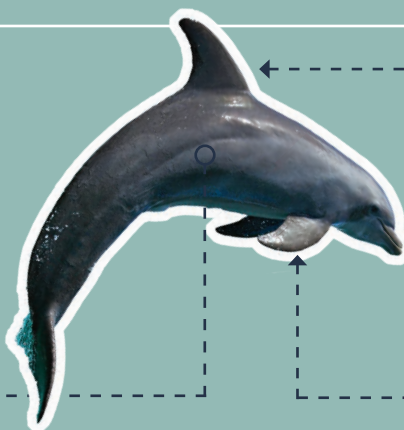
It is compulsory to report species marked by this symbol to the MMO. Find details on how to report on page 40.

Bottlenose dolphin

(*Tursiops truncatus*)

L The largest of all UK dolphins and porpoises, up to 4 m in length.

A 'chunky' robust animal, with a dark grey back and paler grey belly.



Slender curved dorsal fin.

Distinctive short beak and rounded forehead, with a sharp crease between the beak and the forehead.

Moderately long, dark grey, slender flippers with pointed tips and a broad base.

Image credit: ©Brandon Cole/naturepl.com

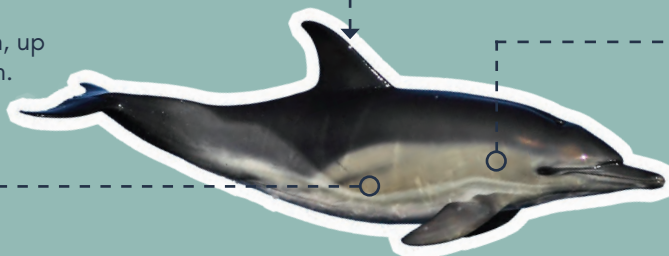
FAO CODE: DBO

Short-beaked common dolphin

(*Delphinus delphis*)

L A slender dolphin, up to 2.7 m in length.

Dark grey back, and white belly.



Dark, slightly curved dorsal fin.

Distinctive hourglass pattern on the sides, including an obvious yellow-cream area behind the beak.

Image credit: ©Robin Chittenden/naturepl.com

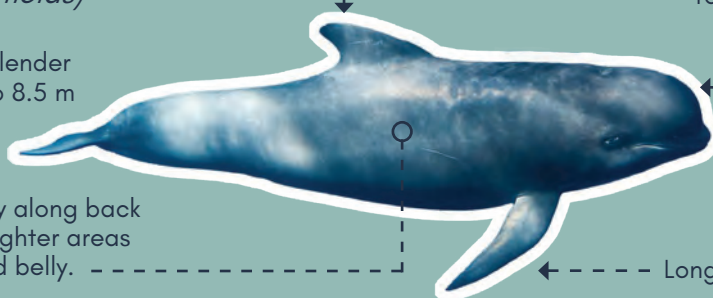
FAO CODE: DCO

Long-finned pilot whale

(*Globicephala melas*)

L Long and slender body, up to 8.5 m in length.

Black or dark grey along back and flanks, with lighter areas between chin and belly.



Low dorsal fin that rounds with age.

Square, bulbous head that hangs over upper lip.

Long sickle-shaped flippers.

Image credit: ©Lisa Steiner/agefotostock.com

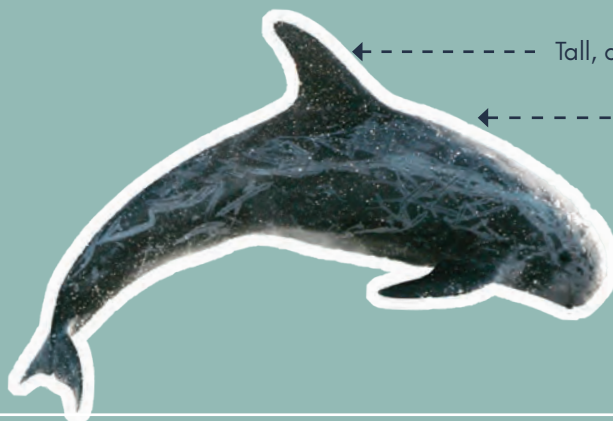
FAO CODE: PIW

Risso's dolphin

(*Grampus griseus*)

L Large dolphin, up to 4 m long.

i Adults are very pale grey to white in colour. Younger Risso's are grey.



Tall, curved dorsal fin.

Often heavily scarred from head to tail.

Large, round head with no beak.

FAO CODE: DRR

Harbour porpoise

(*Phocoena phocoena*)

L Small and stocky, up to 2 m in length.

i Shy surfacing behaviour.

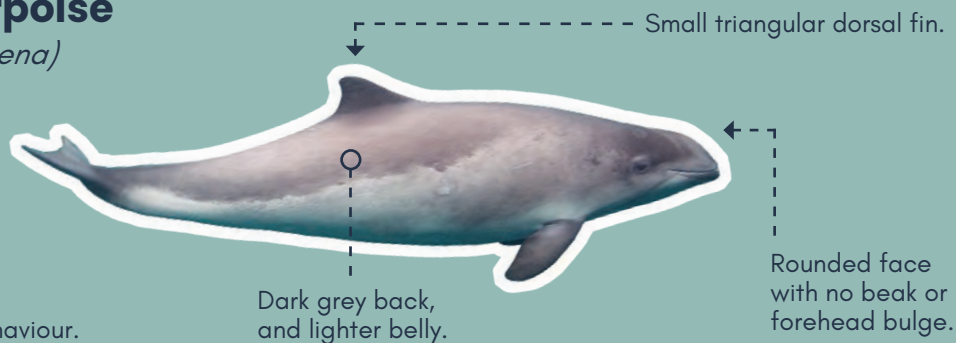


Image credit: ©SCOTLAND: The Big Picture/naturepl.com

C

FAO CODE: PHR

Striped dolphin

(*Stenella coeruleoalba*)

L Small, slender dolphin, up to 2.5 m in length.

Dark grey back, pale flanks, and creamy white underside.

Central, sickle-shaped dorsal fin.

i Similar to the common dolphin, although characterised by dark grey stripes; usually two long stripes, and sometimes a shorter, third stripe.



Image credit: ©Sylvain Cordier/naturepl.com

C

FAO CODE: DST

White-beaked dolphin

(*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*)

L Large, stocky dolphin, up to 3.2 m in length.

Black back with a lighter underbelly, and a white flash on its side and behind the dorsal fin – a 'saddle'.

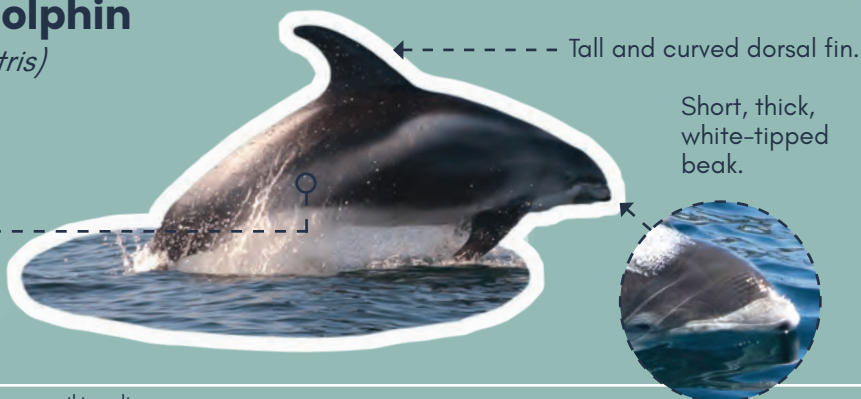


Image credit: ©Charlotte Kirchner/commons.wikimedia.org

! C

FAO CODE: BWD

Atlantic white-sided dolphin

(*Lagenorhynchus acutus*)

L Short, stocky dolphin up to 2.8 m in length.

Tall and curved dorsal fin.

Rounded snout and short beak.

Sloping black head and a black back, and cream-white underneath, with yellow flank patches.

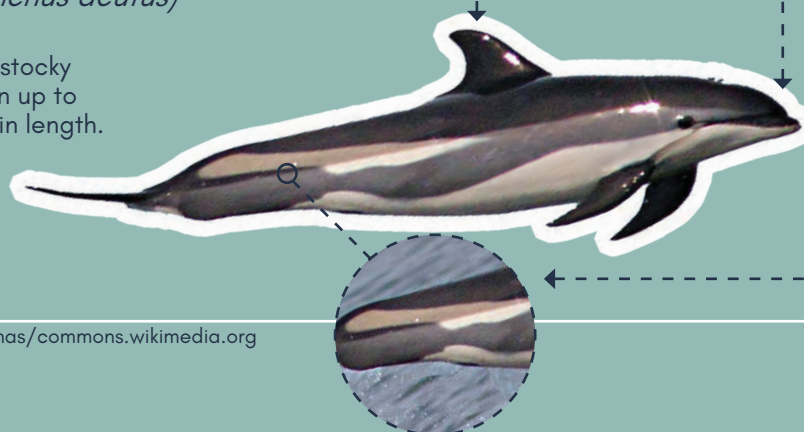


Image credit: ©Cephas/commons.wikimedia.org

! C

FAO CODE: DWH

! VISUALLY SIMILAR SPECIES

The presence of the yellow streak on the side of the Atlantic white-sided dolphin is the key distinguishing feature between the following two species.

White-beaked dolphin

(*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*)

White flash on flanks and a white saddle patch behind the dorsal fin. - - - - ->

White coloured - upper beak.

Atlantic white-sided dolphin

(*Lagenorhynchus acutus*)

Distinctive yellow and white markings along the side of the dolphin.

Dark coloured - upper beak.



Whiteness of the throat and belly of the Atlantic white-sided dolphin extend higher up on the sides than in the White-beaked dolphin.

SEALS

The UK is home to two species of seal, best distinguished from each other through their characteristic nose shape, size, and differences in coat.



Common (Harbour) seal



Grey seal

Mark with a cross to identify and recall previously caught species. Make a note on page 41.

It is compulsory to report species marked by this symbol to the MMO. Find details on how to report on page 40.

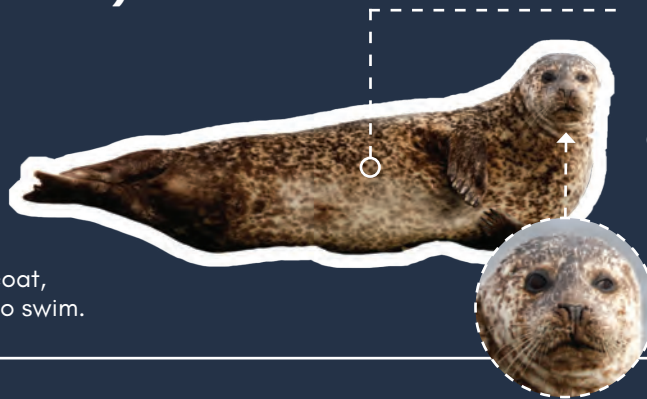


Common (Harbour) seal

(*Phoca vitulina*)

L The smaller of the two UK seal species, up to 2 m in length.

i Pups have a brown coat, and are born ready to swim.



Generally grey with dark spots, although colour can range from blonde to black.

Concave facial profile, and short muzzle with v-shaped nostrils (more dog-like).

FAO CODE: SEC

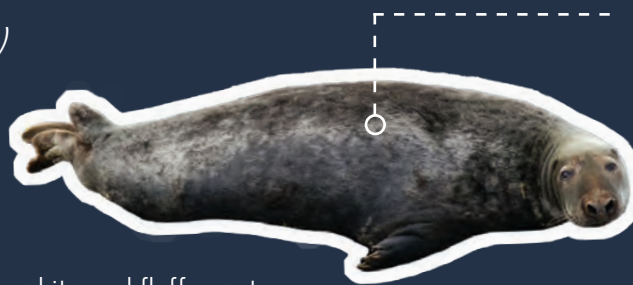


Grey seal

(*Halichoerus grypus*)

L The larger of the two UK seal species, up to 2.6 m in length.

i Pups are born with a white and fluffy coat, but will stay on shore until they moult.



Mainly grey, with unique patterns of dark blotches.

Elongated muzzle, and parallel nostrils, often said to sport a 'Roman' nose.

FAO CODE: SEC

! VISUALLY SIMILAR SPECIES

Both the common (harbour) seal and grey seal are similar in appearance. The key distinguishing feature is the sloping 'Roman' nose present on a grey seal, which isn't present on common (harbour) seals.

Common (Harbour) seal

(*Phoca vitulina*)

Short muzzle with v-shaped nostrils (more dog-like).



Grey seal

(*Halichoerus grypus*)

Elongated muzzle, often said to sport a 'Roman' nose.



TURTLES

These rare visitors to our waters can be identified from one another through size, colour, shell and beak shape, and scales.



Kemp's ridley turtle



**Leatherback
turtle**



Loggerhead turtle

Mark with a cross to identify and recall previously caught species. Make a note on page 41.

Please report this species to Clean Catch UK. Find details on how to report on page 39.

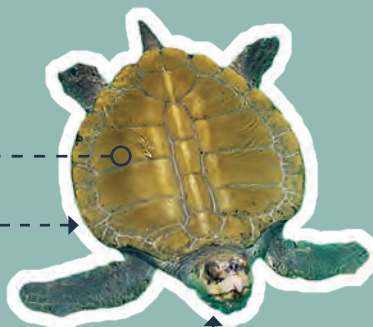
V

Kemp's ridley turtle

(*Lepidochelys kempii*)

- L** Up to 1 m in length, usually juveniles are found in UK waters (30–50 cm).

Grey-green round shell, often as wide as it is long. The shell usually has five pairs of scales.



Front flippers have one claw each.

Triangular shaped head and slightly hooked beak.

Image credit: ©Doug Perrine/naturepl.com, ©NPS Staff (Division of Sea Turtle Science and Recovery)/nps.gov

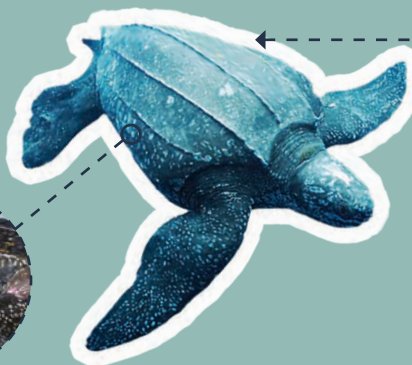
V

Leatherback turtle

(*Dermochelys coriacea*)

- L** The largest marine turtle, up to 2.2 m in length.

- i** The most common turtle species found in the UK.



Leathery, flexible shell which is black with white spots.

Seven pronounced ridges run down the length of the shell, tapering to a blunt spike.

Image credit: ©Doug Perrine/naturepl.com

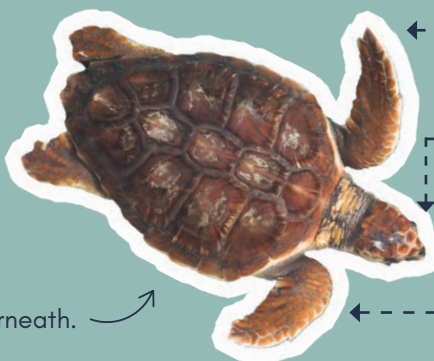
V

Loggerhead turtle

(*Caretta caretta*)

- L** Up to 1 m in length, usually juveniles are found in UK waters (30–50 cm).

Yellow body underneath.



Reddish brown shell and flippers.

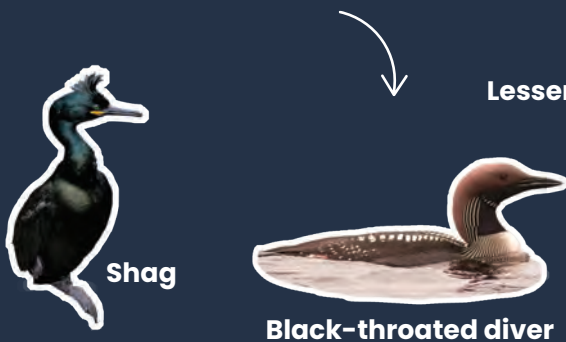
Large, yellow-orange head, a parrot-like beak and powerful jaws.

Front flippers have two claws each.

SEABIRDS

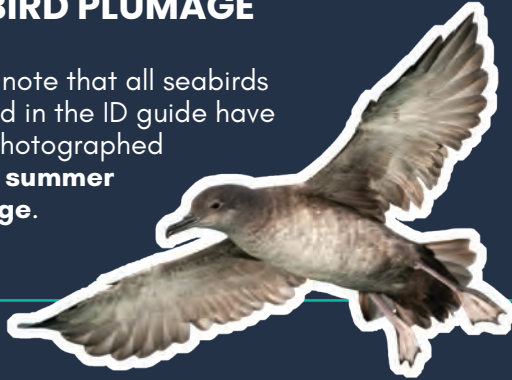
There are a variety of seabirds across UK waters, these have been categorised within the following groups:

- Auks
- Cormorants, Gannets and Shags
- Divers
- Gulls
- Fulmars and Shearwaters



SEABIRD PLUMAGE

Please note that all seabirds pictured in the ID guide have been photographed in their **summer plumage**.



Seabirds that appear distinctively different in their **winter plumage** (January – March) will have a winter plumage icon paired next to them with further guidance to help ID the species.



– Winter plumage

Image credit: ©Luis Quinta/naturepl.com

AUKS

With the distinctive bills of the puffin and razorbill, auks are quite easy to identify. Juvenile individuals can be tricky to distinguish, but identifying key features in their plumage can help aid identification.

Mark with a cross to identify and recall previously caught species. Make a note on page 41.

Please report this species to Clean Catch UK. Find details on how to report on page 39.

Atlantic puffin

(*Fratercula arctica*)

L Up to 30 cm in size.

Plumage is black on their back, and white along their sides and belly.

Legs are a vivid orange, accompanied by webbed feet.



← Broad bill with distinctive red, yellow and blue patterning, becoming smaller and duller during winter months. **W**

i Juveniles lack the distinctive bill of adults, but a pale face rimmed with black distinguishes them from other seabirds of similar colours.



Guillemot

(*Uria aalge*)

L Up to 45 cm in length.

Plumage is 'dark chocolate' brown with a fine white tip on the edge of the wing feathers and white underside. Might also sport a white streak across the face, originating at the eye.



Thin, dagger-like bill.

W Wintering adults have a dark cap on the crown, a white throat, and white cheeks with a black streak from the eye.

← Black legs with webbed feet.

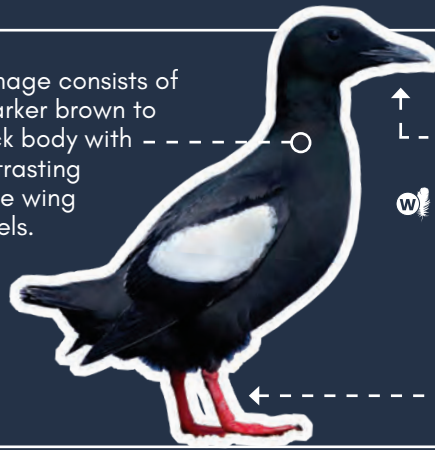


Black guillemot (*Cephus grylle*)

L Up to 32 cm, a slightly smaller seabird.

i More commonly found in pairs or small groups compared to other auks.

Plumage consists of a darker brown to black body with contrasting white wing panels.



L Thin, dagger-like black bill.

W Wintering adults lose the intense darker blacks on their body and neck, with more white and grey showing through.

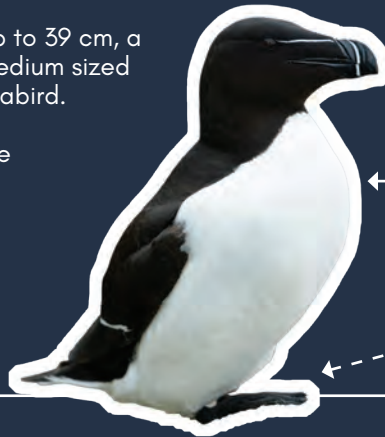
L Red legs with webbed feet.



Razorbill (*Alca torda*)

L Up to 39 cm, a medium sized seabird.

i Juvenile razorbills have the characteristic bill of the adults, with less distinct white lines. They appear darker in the face than guillemots, which they appear similar to.



L Distinctive broad bill crossed with a pattern of white bands. A white line leads from the bill to the eye.

L Sharply contrasted white breast against a black back, wings, and head, developing a white cheek-patch in the winter. **W**

L Black legs with webbed feet.



CORMORANTS, GANNETS AND SHAGS

Whilst the bright white gannet stands out amongst these diving birds, cormorants and shags can be easily mistaken for one another. Key differences in bill thickness, forehead slope, and the presence of a crest allow these birds to be separately identified.

Mark with a cross to identify and recall previously caught species. Make a note on page 41.

Please report this species to Clean Catch UK. Find details on how to report on page 39.

Cormorant

(*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

L Up to 90 cm in length, a very large UK seabird.

Black plumage with a bluish sheen, broken by a white patch on the throat and thigh.

Gently sloping forehead lacking the distinctive crest of a shag.

Long, hooked beak of a medium thickness, both yellow and black in colour.

Often has a white patch behind the bill.

Brown, webbed feet.



Northern gannet

(*Morus bassanus*)

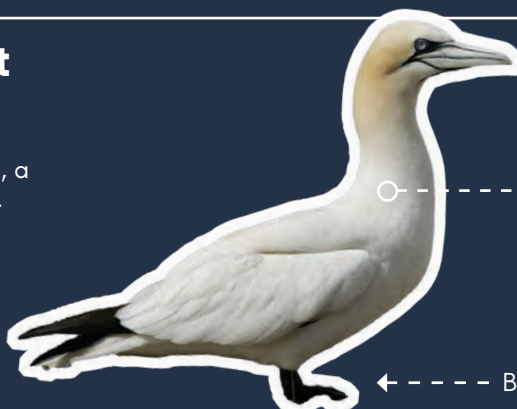
L Up to 90 cm in length, a very large UK seabird.

i Juveniles exhibit brown plumage that transitions into a speckled pattern across the bird until adulthood.

Powerful black-blue dagger-like bill.

Adult birds exhibit a 'whiter-than-white' plumage, black wingtips and a head stained with a 'butterscotch' yellow.

Black legs with webbed feet.



Shag

(*Gulosos aristotelis*)

L Up to 80 cm in length.

Black-green glossy plumage and clear crest in the breeding season.

Steep forehead accompanied by a forward pointing crest.

Thin, hooked bill.

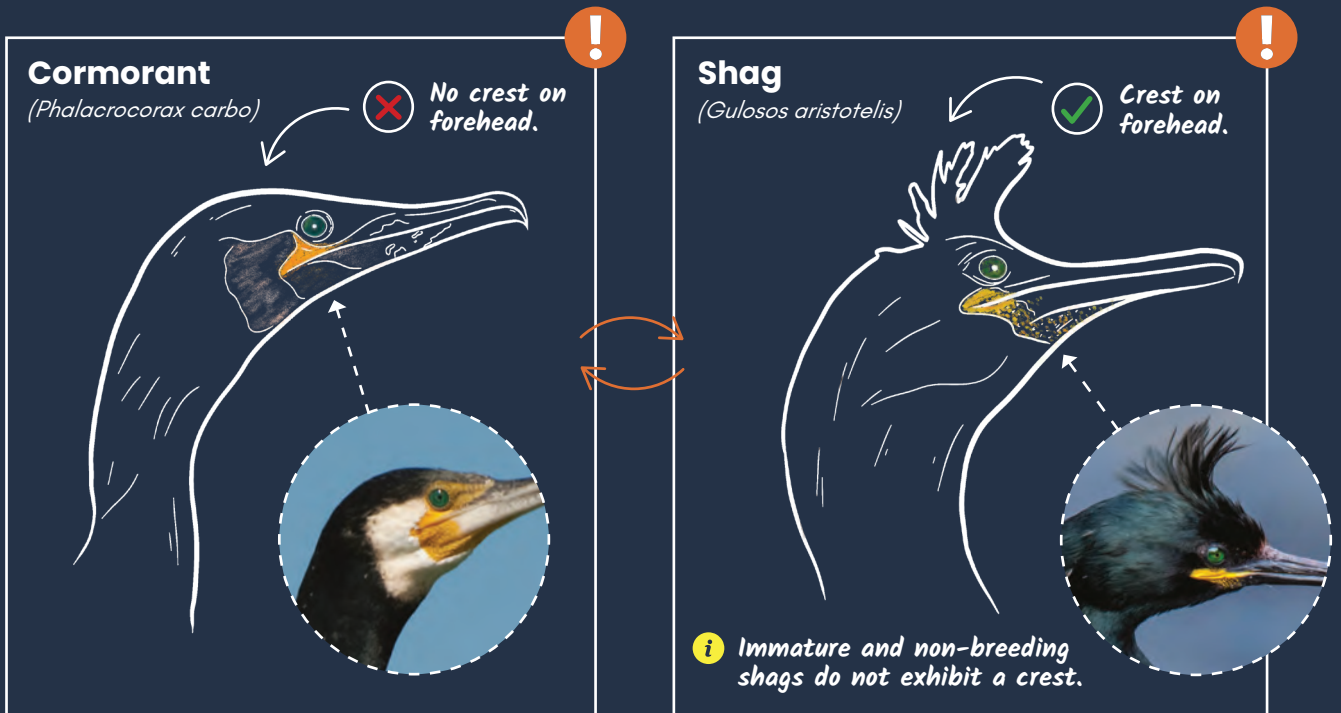
Dark legs with webbed feet.



i Find a comparative illustration on the following page to assist with differentiating the cormorant and shag.

! VISUALLY SIMILAR SPECIES

Both the cormorant and shag are similar in appearance. A key distinguishing feature is the steep sloping forehead and crest, that shags have and cormorants don't.



DIVERS

Easily spotted in the warmer months when sporting their bright summer plumage, these birds can appear very similar during winter months, where they become more common along the UK coastline. Key differences in contrast between the light and dark plumage along the body, and the presence of white patches on the cheek and flank, can help identify different diver species from one another.

Mark with a cross to identify and recall previously caught species. Make a note on page 41.

Please report this species to Clean Catch UK. Find details on how to report on page 39.

Black-throated diver

(*Gavia arctica*)

L Up to 73 cm in length.

Brown legs, positioned far back on the body, with webbed feet.

Summer plumage consists of a silky grey head, black throat, with a chequerboard black and white pattern covering its back.



Straight, dagger-like black bill.

W In winter, plumage is darker grey, with a white underside and a distinctive white patch on its flank. Unlike other winter divers, there is a sharp contrast between white and grey plumage across its body.

Great northern diver

(*Gavia immer*)

L Up to 89 cm in length, this bird is the largest of the divers.

Brown legs, positioned far back on the body, with webbed feet.

Summer plumage consists of a black to dark bottle-green head and neck, accompanied by a grey body with a chequerboard black and white back.



Dagger-like black bill and 'lumpy' head shape.

W Winter plumage consists of a softly contrasted grey and white around the head and neck. A white 'nick' is often present behind the cheeks of the bird.

Red-throated diver

(*Gavia stellata*)

L Up to 60 cm in length, the smallest of the divers.

Black legs, positioned far back on the body, with webbed feet.

W During winter, the silky grey head and red throat is lost, replaced with white sides of the head and neck, and paler grey back speckled with white spots.



Slightly upturned black beak.

Brown summer plumage, with a white underside, silky grey head, and distinctive 'gory' red throat.

GULLS

The distinctive white-grey plumage of gulls can make them difficult to identify from one another, but key differences in size, bill shape, and eye and leg colour can help with this process. Juvenile gulls can be difficult to identify due to their mottled appearance across this group of birds, but key differences in their feather patterns and colour make identification possible.

Mark with a cross to identify and recall previously caught species. Make a note on page 41.

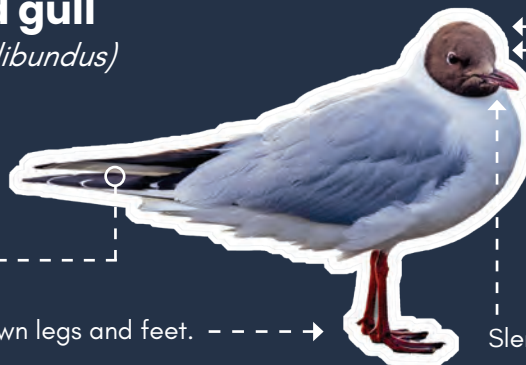
Please report this species to Clean Catch UK. Find details on how to report on page 39.

Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)

L Up to 37 cm in length.

Grey wings with black tips.

Red-brown legs and feet.



Chocolate-brown head during the summer months.

W A mostly white head for much of the year with small brown spots on either side.

Slender red beak.

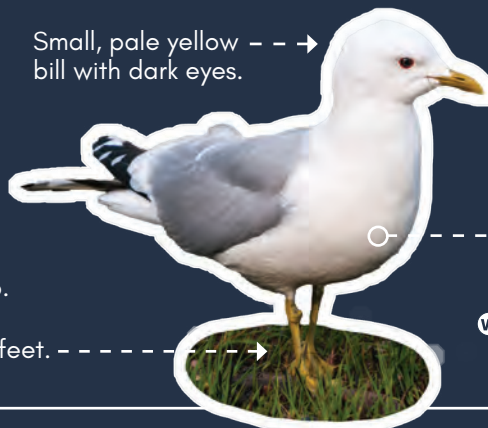
Common gull (*Larus canus*)

L Up to 42 cm in length.

i The bills of younger individuals are grey in colour, with a black tip.

Yellow legs with webbed feet.

Small, pale yellow bill with dark eyes.



i Juveniles exhibit a black band along the end of their tail, with a dark grey speckled pattern adorning their wings, back, and neck.

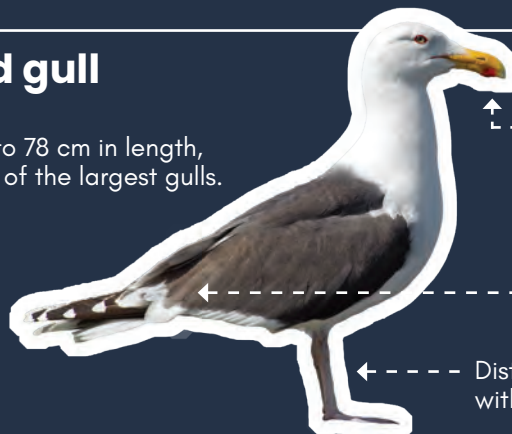
Blue-grey wings and back, with a bright white head and chest, and black tipped wings.

W In winter, adults develop peppered heads and necks.

Great black-backed gull (*Larus marinus*)

L Up to 78 cm in length, one of the largest gulls.

i Juveniles exhibit grey-brown mottled plumage, with a black tail band and chequerboard pattern on their backs that is less clear cut than those seen in herring gulls.



Thick yellow bill with a single red spot.

Adult birds have jet black wings and back, accompanied by a white blob at each wingtip.

Distinctive pink legs with webbed feet.

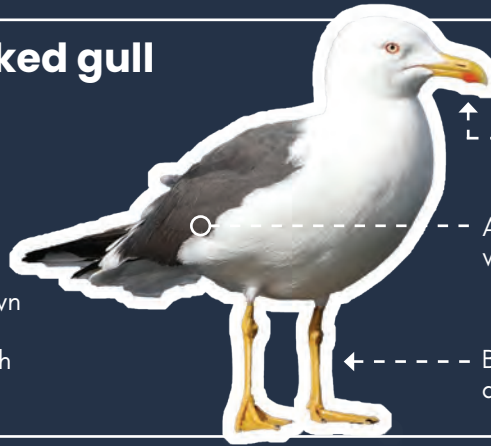
Image credit: ©Andreas Trepte/commons.wikimedia.org

Lesser black-backed gull

(*Larus fuscus*)

L Up to 64 cm in length.

i Juveniles exhibit a grey-brown mottled plumage, darker tail with the grey coming through as age progresses.



← -- Adults have yellow eyes.

↑ -- Thick yellow bill with single red spot.

○ -- Adults have dark slate-grey wings and back.

← -- Bright yellow/orange legs and webbed feet.

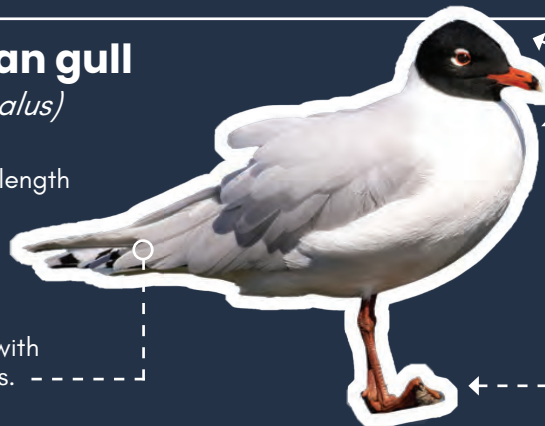


Mediterranean gull

(*Larus melanocephalus*)

L Up to 38 cm in length

Very pale grey back with bright-white wing tips. - - - - -



↑ -- All-black head in the summer months.

↑ -- Bright red beak, large for a bird this size, slightly down-turned.

w In winter the black head is replaced by a dark patch that extends from the eyes to the back of the head.

← -- Red-brown legs and feet.



Image credit: ©Alexis Lours/inaturalist.org

Herring gull

(*Larus argentatus*)

L Up to 60 cm in length.

i Juveniles in their first and second years wear a mottled brown plumage, with darker bills.



↑ -- Heavy yellow bills with a slight hook, marked with a singular red spot.

○ -- Adults have a light grey back, white undersides, and black wingtips.

i Distinguishable from common gulls due to their yellow eyes, larger size and pink legs.



Kittiwake

(*Rissa tridactyla*)

L Up to 40 cm in length.

i Juvenile plumage differs from adults with a black bar across the wing in the shape of a 'W', black patches on the face, and a black beak.



← -- Small yellow bill.

○ -- Grey plumage with black-tipped wings. The rest of the body and head are bright white.

← -- Distinctive black legs with webbed feet.



Little gull

(*Hydrocoloeus minutus*)

i Juvenile individuals lack the black head, instead wearing a black patch across their crown with an ear spot. A black bar is present across the wing in the shape of a 'W'.

L Up to 27 cm in length, this is a small, 'delicate' gull.



Small, thin bill that can be black through to a dull red.

Adult summer plumage consists of a black head, light grey wings with a dark grey underwing, lacking a black wingtip. Wintering adults lack this black head, reduced to an ear spot. **W**

Red legs with webbed feet.

Image credit: ©Andrey Gulivanov/commons.wikimedia.org

! VISUALLY SIMILAR SPECIES

Some gull species can appear quite similar in appearance. Differences in leg colour and wing plumage can help identify them from one another.



FULMARS, PETRELS AND SHEARWATERS

These seabirds can appear quite similar, but are best distinguished from each other through distinctive wing and head markings, and their notable differences in size.

Mark with a cross to identify and recall previously caught species. Make a note on page 41.

Please report this species to Clean Catch UK. Find details on how to report on page 39.

Balearic shearwater

(*Puffinus mauretanicus*)

L Up to 39 cm in length.

i Larger than the Manx shearwater, to which it has a similar appearance.



Dark, thin hooked bill.

Brown plumage with a dull white underside.

Pink-brown legs.

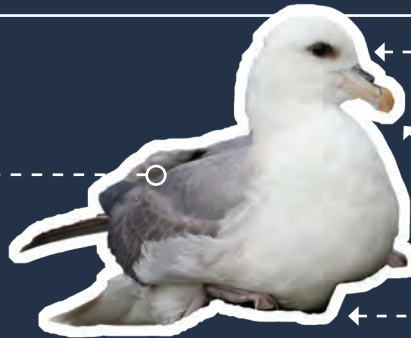
Image credit: ©Robin Chittenden/naturepl.com

Fulmar

(*Fulmarus glacialis*)

L Up to 50 cm in length.

Gull-like, ashy grey and white plumage.



Distinguishable by its thick head and neck, with a dark patch of feathers near the eyes.

Hooked bill with a tubular ridge lining the nose.

Grey legs with webbed feet.

Great shearwater

(*Ardenna gravis*)

L Up to 51 cm in length.

Brown or pink legs.



Dark grey-brown plumage with pale white underparts.

Distinctive black-brown cap on head alongside the dark markings on its belly and underwing distinguishes this bird from other shearwaters.

Dark, thin hooked bill.

Image credit: ©Mike Read/naturepl.com

Manx shearwater

(*Puffinus puffinus*)

L Up to 38 cm in length.

i With some individuals around 30 cm in length, this species tends to be smaller than other shearwaters.

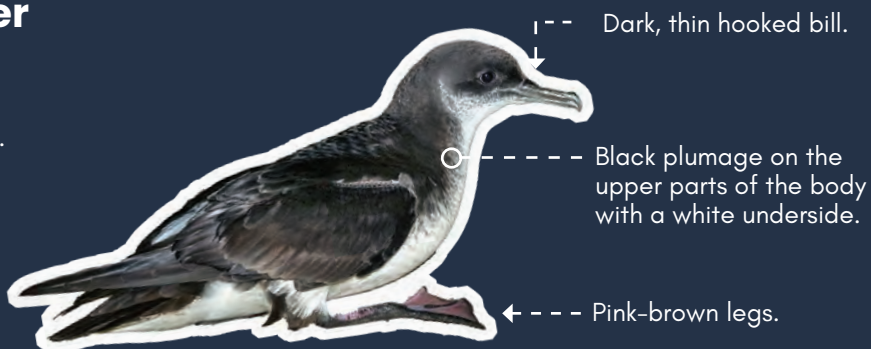


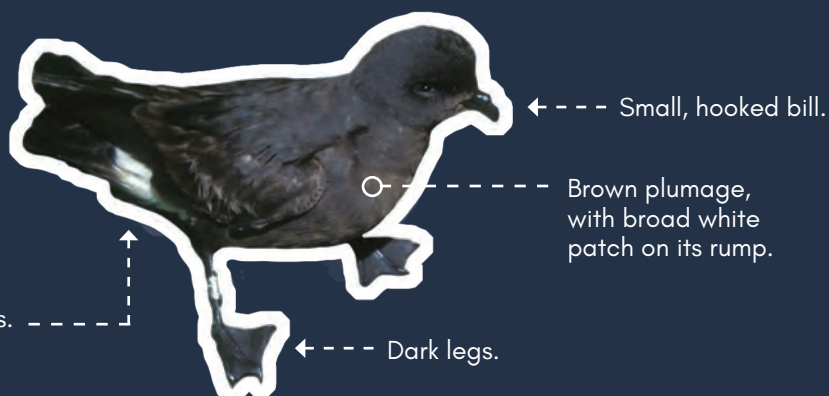
Image credit: ©Melvin Grey/naturepl.com

Storm petrel

(*Hydrobates pelagicus*)

L Up to 18 cm in length.

White band along underside of wings.



SKATES AND RAYS

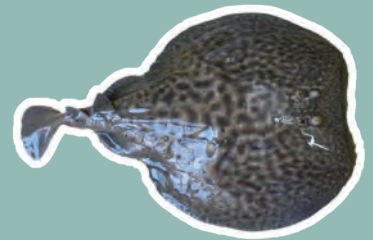
UK waters are host to a range of skates and rays. These flat-bodied fish can be distinguished from one another by their size, shape, colour, and patterning.



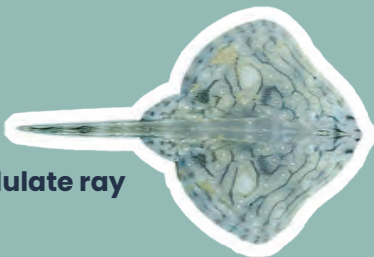
Common eagle ray



Spotted ray



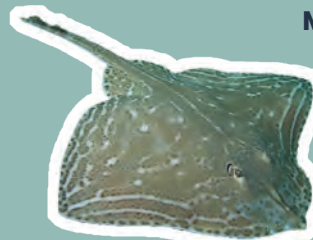
Marbled electric ray



Undulate ray



Blonde ray



Small-eyed ray



Longnosed skate



Common stingray



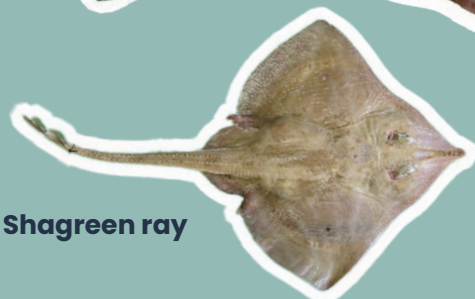
Blue skate



White skate



**Starry ray/
Thorny skate**



Shagreen ray



Cuckoo ray



Atlantic torpedo ray/Electric ray



Flapper skate

Mark with a cross to identify and recall previously caught species. Make a note on page 41.

Please report this species to Clean Catch UK. Find details on how to report on page 39.

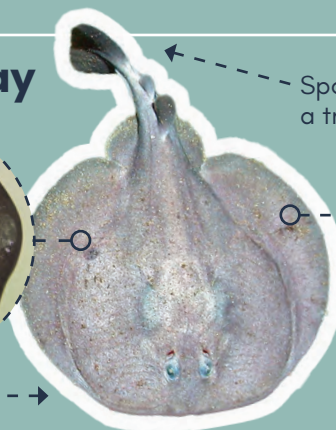
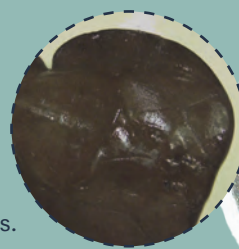
Atlantic torpedo ray/Electric ray

(*Tetronarce nobiliana*)

L Up to 185 cm in length.

Dark-grey to purple-brown on top. Creamy white underneath with dark margins.

Round fleshy body.



Sports a thick tail with a triangular caudal fin.

Skin is smooth and completely free of thorns and spines, with a jelly-like texture.

Image credit: ©Unknown author/commons.wikimedia.org

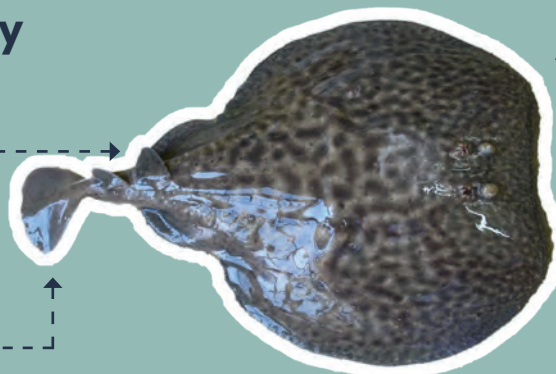
Marbled electric ray

(*Torpedo marmorata*)

L Up to 80 cm in length.

Two dorsal fins present on tail.

Well developed caudal fin.



Marbled brown colouration.

Rounded body and snout.

Image credit: ©Alexandra Alves/commons.wikimedia.org

Common stingray

(*Dasyatis pastinaca*)

L Up to 140 cm in length, with a rounded triangular-shaped body.

Thin, long tail containing a large, serrated stinger.



Dark grey-brown in colour, with white underside.

Blunt thorns may be present in a row along the backs of older individuals.

Image credit: ©Citron/commons.wikimedia.org

Common eagle ray

(*Myliobatis aquila*)

L Up to 183 cm in length, large pointed wings and protruding snout.

Can sometimes have very small spines on the body and the tail conceals one (or sometimes two) large venomous spines.

Long whip-like tail, often double or treble the body length.

Small dorsal fin is set far back on the body at the base of the tail.

Brown, olive, or black colouring with a pale underside.

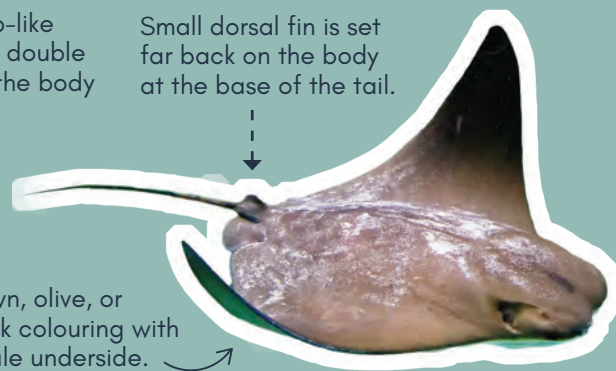


Image credit: ©TheSupermat/commons.wikimedia.org

Blue skate

(*Dipturus batis*)

L Commonly up to 150 cm in length.

Brown colouring on top, often with pale spots and streaks.

Dark grey underneath, becoming paler with age.

Row of 12-31 thorns along the tail.

Lateral spines on the side of the tail point out at right-angles.

Oval eyespots on inner wings, with a yellowish margin and darker centre.

Iris of eye is pale-yellow.

Black sensory pores visible on top and underside.

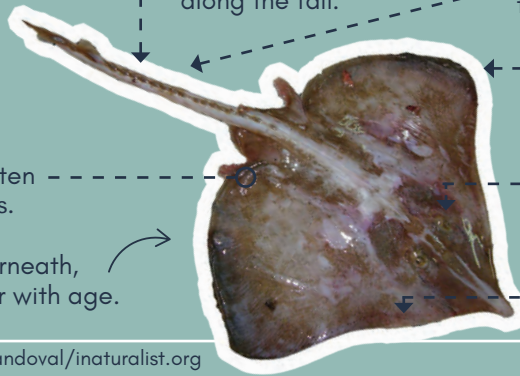


Image credit: ©Gonzalo Mucientes Sandoval/inaturalist.org

Flapper skate

(*Dipturus intermedius*)

L Up to 285 cm in length.

Olive to dark brown with a variable pattern of lighter blotches (pale in juveniles, becoming grey-brown with age) on the back.

Lateral thorns on the tail point towards the head of the animal.

Adults have two rows of 12-18 thorns on the tail.

Dark olive-green iris of the eyes.

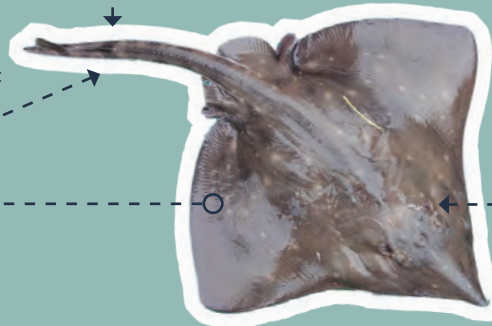


Image credit: ©Bache-Jeffreys, M., de Moraes, B.L.C., Ball, R.E./commons.wikimedia.org

! VISUALLY SIMILAR SPECIES

Both the blue skate and flapper skate are very similar in appearance.

Key differences between the two species are snout shape, direction of the lateral thorns and eye colour. Flappers grow to much larger sizes than blues.

Blue skate

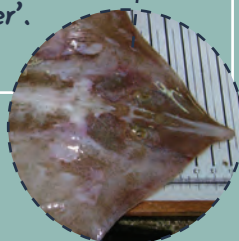
(*Dipturus batis*)

Lateral thorns on the tail of the blue skate point outwards, perpendicular to the tail.

Blue skate have a smaller gap between their two dorsal fins compared to a flapper skate.

Has an eye-spot on each wing.

Snout is less pronounced and 'blunter'.



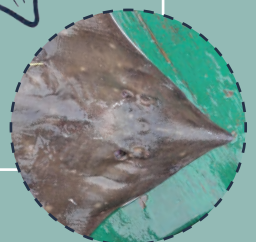
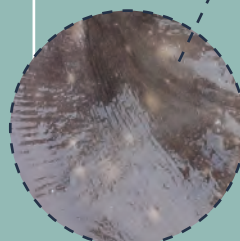
Flapper skate

(*Dipturus intermedius*)

Lateral thorns on the tail of a flapper skate point towards the head of the animal.

Has a loose grouping of light coloured spots.

Snout is more pronounced and 'sharper'.



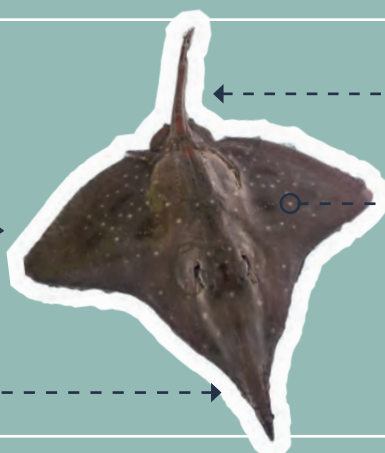
Longnosed skate

(*Dipturus oxyrinchus*)

L Up to 150 cm in length.

Dusky brown or grey top, and dark brown or bluish grey underside.

Very long, pointed snout.



Row of 4-11 thorns along the tail, sometimes worn down.

Pattern of light and dark spots on top.

Image credit: ©Sunhill/inaturalist.org

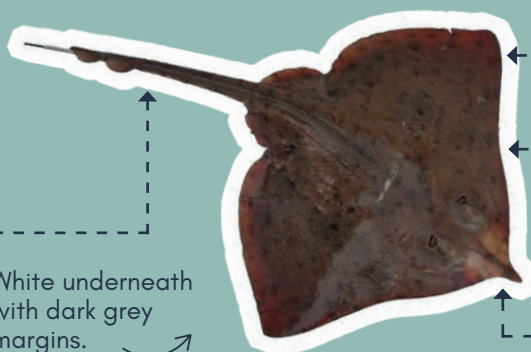
White skate

(*Rostroraja alba*)

L Up to 200 cm in length.

Rows of 10-30 spines on the tail have weakly ridged bases, sometimes worn down.

White underneath with dark grey margins.



Grey/black with numerous whitish spots on top.

The top, except for the middle of the wings, is covered with small prickles.

Long pointed snout.

Image credit: ©Theo Modder/commons.wikimedia.org

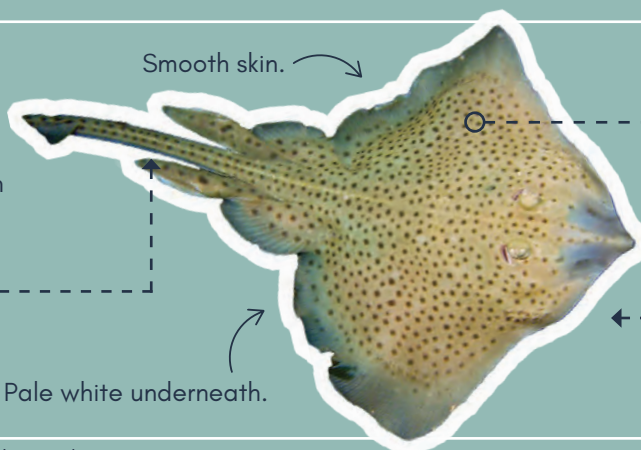
Spotted ray

(*Raja montagui*)

L Up to 80 cm in length.

A row of 20-50 spines along the midline to the first dorsal fin.

Pale white underneath.



Smooth skin.

Pale yellow to grey-brown on top, with numerous dark spots. The spots do not extend to the edge of the disc.

Relatively small, diamond-shaped ray.

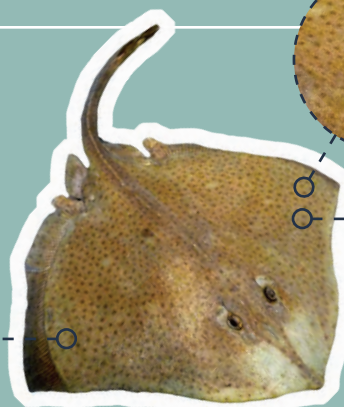
Image credit: ©Ross Bullimore/inaturalist.org

Blonde ray

(*Raja brachyura*)

L Up to 120 cm in length.

Large and diamond shaped, with a short snout.



Pale brown to grey-brown on top, with small dark spots all over its back that extend to the edge of its wings, as well as a scattering of larger pale spots.

White underneath.

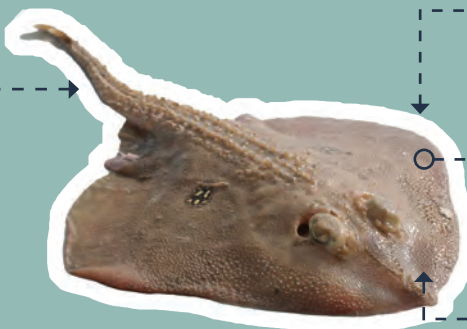
Image credit: ©Citron/commons.wikimedia.org

Cuckoo ray

(*Leucoraja naevus*)

L Relatively small ray, up to 75 cm in length.

Three to five rows of thorns run down its lower back and along its tail.



Triangular shape with a pointed snout and a short tail compared to other rays.

Sandy coloured back with a large black and yellow marbled eyespot on each wing.

Rough skin.



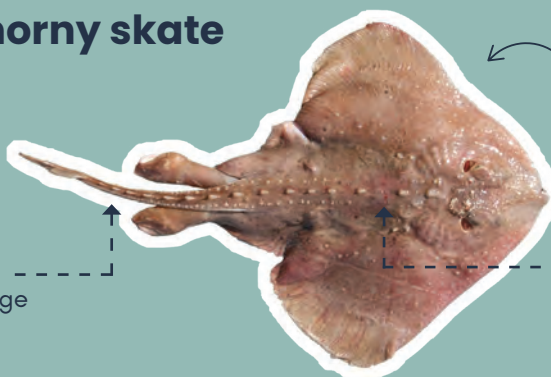
Image credit: ©Ecomare/Oscar Bos/commons.wikimedia.org

Starry ray/ Thorny skate

(*Amblyraja radiata*)

L Up to 105 cm in length.

Tail shorter than body with a row of 13-17 large thorns running down.



Muddy brown in colour, with a white underside.

Triangular, short and blunt snout.

Many small thorns are present across the animal, with larger ones lining from the back of the head to the end of the tail.

Image credit: ©Ecomare/Oscar Bos

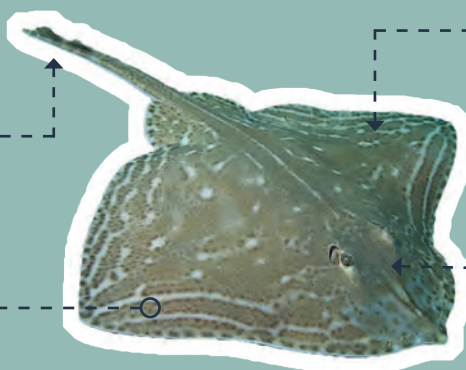
Small-eyed ray

(*Raja microocellata*)

Tail is slightly shorter than the body.

L Up to 91 cm in length.

Pale sandy brown to olive grey.



Regular pattern of lighter streaks, spots, and blotches on top. Pale lines run parallel with the front edges of the wings.

Small eyes.



Image credit: ©Sue Daly/naturepl.com

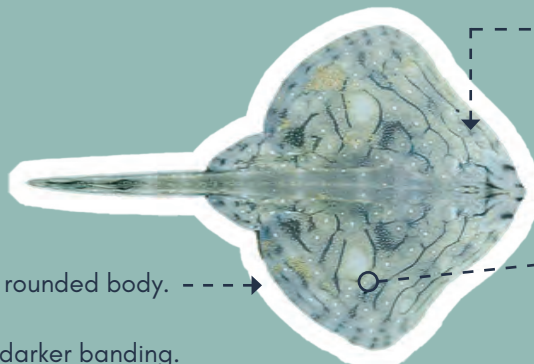
Undulate ray

(*Raja undulata*)

L Up to 120 cm in length.

More rounded body.

Juveniles have some darker banding.



Brown-grey colouring with wavy patterns along its back bordered by white spots.

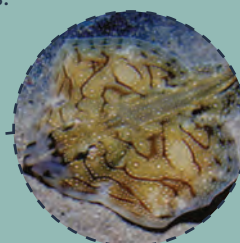


Image credit: ©Diego Delso/commons.wikimedia.org

Shagreen ray

(*Leucoraja fullonica*)

L

Up to 120 cm
in length.

Two rows of about 50
spines, each running
from the centre of the
back to the first dorsal fin.

Solid grey/ brown
on top and white
underneath with
light grey margins.

Cone-shaped,
pointed snout.

Patches of large
spines on the snout,
around the eyes,
and on the head.

Rough texture on top,
smooth underneath
(except the tail).

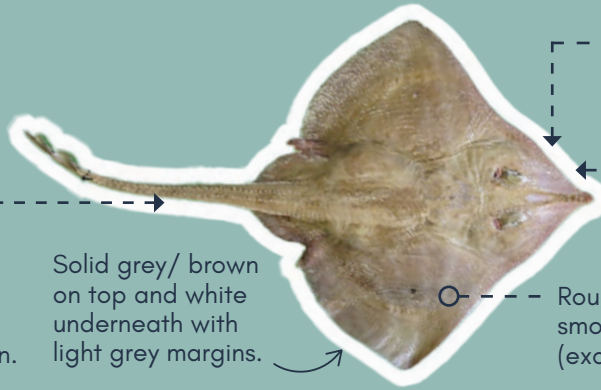
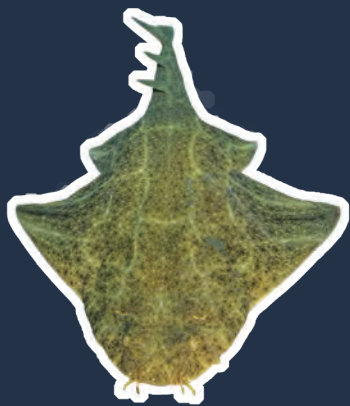


Image credit: ©University of Bergen, Natural History Collections/commons.wikimedia.org

SHARKS

Size, shape, colour, and fin positioning are key identifiers when naming one of the many sharks present within our seas.



Angel shark



Basking shark



Shortfin mako shark



Porbeagle shark



Thresher shark



Bluntnose six-gill shark



Starry smoothhound



Spurdog



Blue shark



Tope

Mark with a cross to identify and recall previously caught species. Make a note on page 41.

Please report this species to Clean Catch UK. Find details on how to report on page 39.

Angel shark (*Squatina squatina*)

L Long, flat, squat body, up to 2.5 m in length.

Eyes and gill slits are positioned on the top of their body.

Two dorsal fins set far back on the body.

Extremely large pectoral fins that resemble ray wings.

Reddish or greenish brown colouring, with scattered small white spots and dark dots, and patterns of lighter lines.

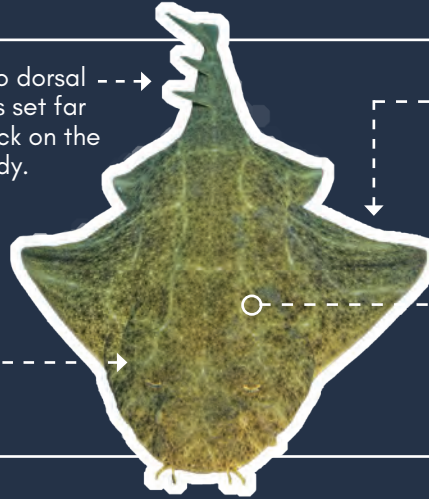


Image credit: ©Pascal Kobeh/naturepl.com

Basking shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*)

L The largest shark in UK waters, up to 10 m in length.

Grey or grey-brown colouring, sometimes with lighter stripes on the flank, or with irregular white blotches on the underside of the head and abdomen.

Huge, triangular dorsal fin which often flops to the side when above water.

Pointed, bulbous snout.

Huge gaping mouth, and large gill slits that almost encircle the head.

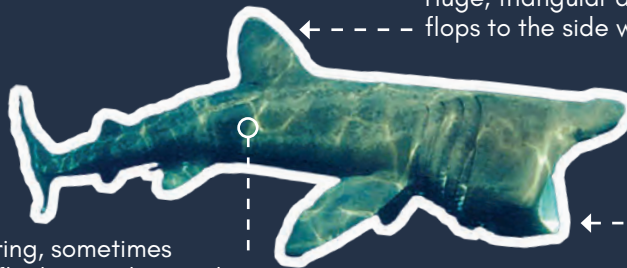


Image credit: ©Dan Burton/naturepl.com

Blue shark (*Prionace glauca*)

L Large, light bodied sharks, up to 3.8 m in length.

Asymmetrical caudal fin, with a large upper lobe.

Dark blue on top, metallic blue on the flanks and white underneath.

First dorsal fin closer to pelvic fins than pectoral fins.

Teeth are triangular and serrated.

Long, curved pectoral fins.

Second dorsal fin equal in size to, and directly above, anal fin.



Bluntnose six-gill shark (*Hexanchus griseus*)

L Relatively slim, streamlined shape up to 4.8 m in length.

Grey, olive, or brown colouring with lighter lateral lines along each flank, and paler underneath.

Single dorsal fin set back on body over anal fin.

Fluorescent blue-green eyes in live animals.

Large anal fin.

Large pelvic fin.

Six pairs of gill slits.



Image credit: ©NOAA Ocean Explorer/commons.wikimedia.org

Porbeagle shark

(*Lamna nasus*)

L Large, stocky, tapered body up to 3 m in length.

i Keel - A ridge found along the base of the caudal fin.

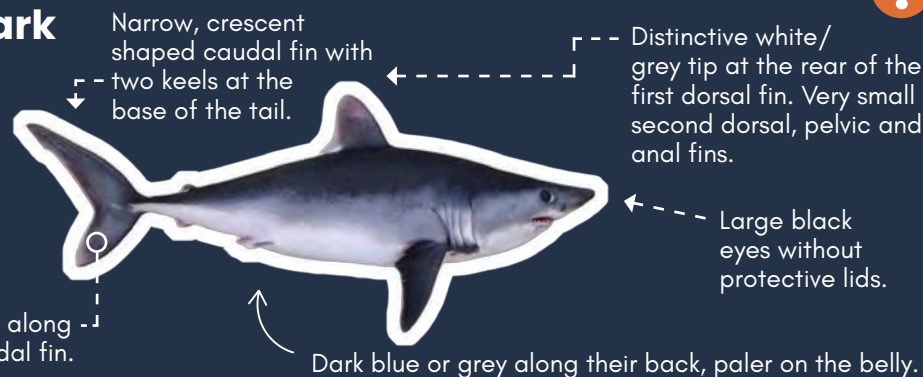


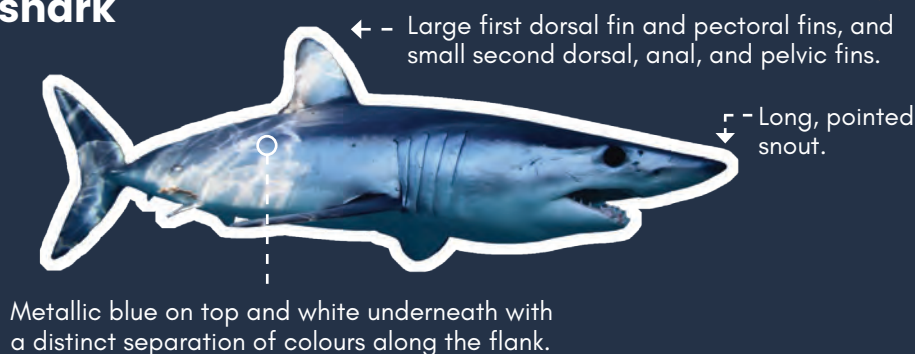
Image credit: ©NMFS, E. Hoffmayer, S. Iglésias and R. McAuley/commons.wikimedia.org

Shortfin mako shark

(*Isurus oxyrinchus*)

L Streamlined body up to 4 m in length.

Crescent shaped caudal fin with single keel.



Spurdog

(*Squalus acanthias*)

L Streamlined, slender body up to 1.25 m in length (similar to starry smoothhound).

Grey or blue-grey on top, with a row of white spots on the flanks and pale colouring underneath.

Two large dorsal fins with a venomous spike situated directly in front of each.

No anal fin.

i As of 2023, it is now legal to catch spurdog under 100 cm in length, with larger individuals to be placed back in the sea.



Image credit: ©Doug Costa, NOAA/SBNMS/commons.wikimedia.org

Starry smoothhound

(*Mustelus asterias*)

L Streamlined, slender shark up to 1.25 m long.

Greyish-brown with a scattering of white spots on its upper surface.

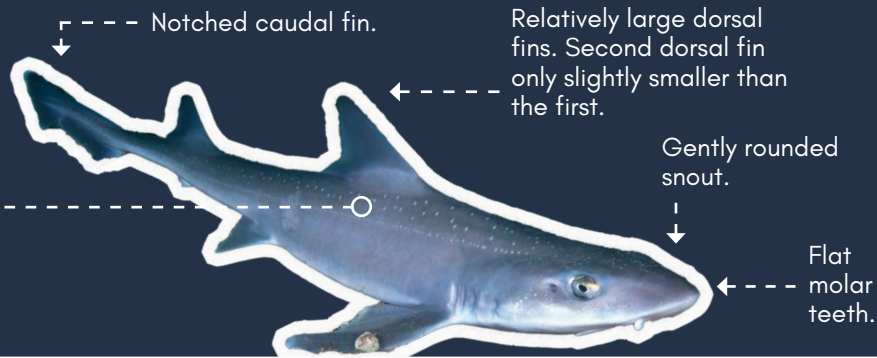


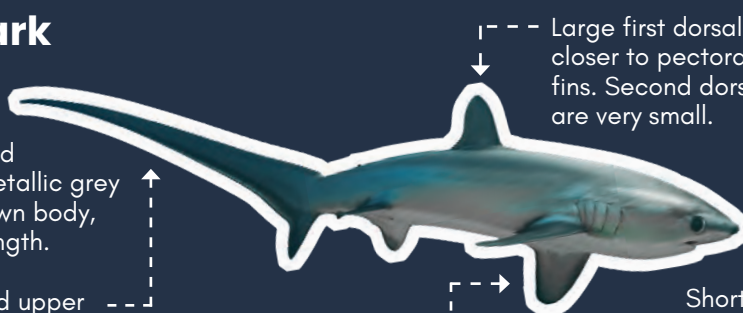
Image credit: ©Sue Daly/naturepl.com

Thresher shark

(*Alopias vulpinus*)

- L** Torpedo-shaped shark with a metallic grey to purplish brown body, up to 5 m in length.

Enormously elongated upper part of caudal fin, often as long as the rest of the shark.



Sickle-shaped, sharply pointed pectoral fins.

Large first dorsal fin positioned closer to pectoral fins than pelvic fins. Second dorsal fin and anal fin are very small.

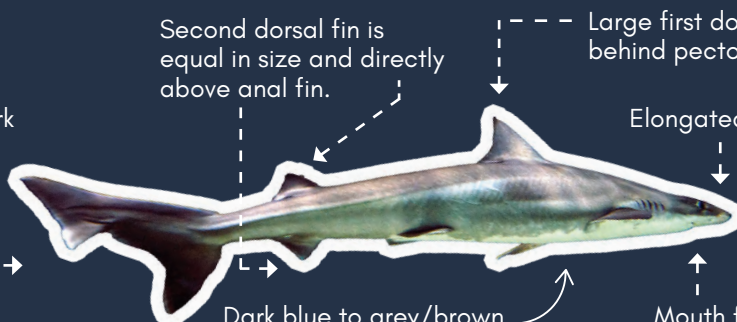
Short, broad head, with large black eyes lacking protective lids.

Tope

(*Galeorhinus galeus*)

- L** Shallow-bodied shark that can grow up to 2 m long.

Upper part of caudal fin is notched with a relatively large lower lobe of the caudal fin.



Second dorsal fin is equal in size and directly above anal fin.

Large first dorsal fin set behind pectoral fins.

Elongated head.

Dark blue to grey/brown in colour with a white belly.

Mouth full of small, cusped teeth.

! VISUALLY SIMILAR SPECIES

Both the shortfin mako shark and the porbeagle shark are similar in appearance. Differences in fin shape, tail keels, and teeth can distinguish these sharks from one another.

Shortfin mako shark

(*Isurus oxyrinchus*)

Taller dorsal fin.



Only one keel on tail.

Teeth are long and lack serrations or basal cusps.



Porbeagle shark

(*Lamna nasus*)

Distinctive white/grey tip at the rear of the first dorsal fin.

Smaller, more rounded dorsal fin.



Main keel and secondary keel on tail.

Large triangular teeth with a cusp each side of the base.

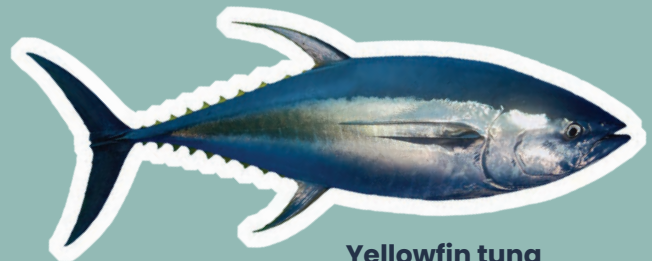


TUNA

Key differences in size, colour, fin-length, and fin-shape can help identify the range of tuna that are present in UK waters.



Albacore



Yellowfin tuna



Atlantic bluefin tuna



Bigeye tuna



Atlantic bonito

Mark with a cross to identify and recall previously caught species. Make a note on page 41.

Please report this species to Clean Catch UK. Find details on how to report on page 39.

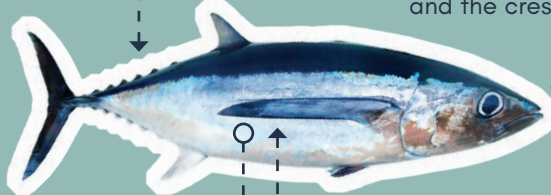
V

Albacore

(*Thunnus alalunga*)

L Smallest of the bluefin tuna, growing up to 1.4 m in length.

Dark blue with a silvery-white underbelly and yellow fins.



Up to 7-9 silver-blue finlets are present between the last dorsal and anal fins and the crescent-shaped caudal fin.

Large head, mouth, and eyes.

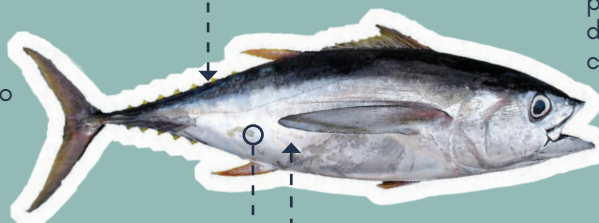
Pectoral fins can be a third of the animal's body length.

Bigeye tuna

(*Thunnus obesus*)

L Deep, streamlined body reaching up to 2.5 m in length.

Dark blue body with a silvery-white underbelly accompanied by yellow fins.



Up to 7-10 yellow finlets with black edges are present between the last dorsal and anal fins and the crescent-shaped caudal fin.

Large head, mouth and eyes.

Pectoral fins often reach behind the second dorsal fin.

Image credit: ©Allen Shimada, NOAA NMFS OST/commons.wikimedia.org

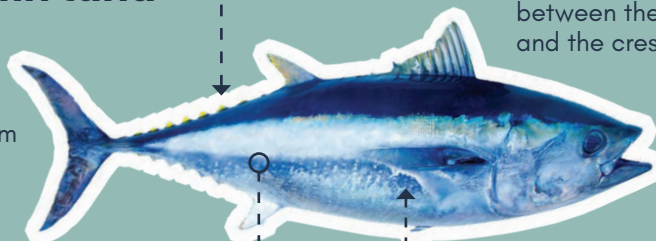
V

Atlantic bluefin tuna

(*Thunnus thynnus*)

L Streamlined body up to 2.5 m in length.

Dark blue in colour with a grey underbelly and bright yellow fins.



7-10 yellow finlets are present between the last dorsal and anal fins and the crescent-shaped caudal fin.

Large head, mouth, and eyes.

Distinguishable from other tuna species by shorter pectoral fins, which do not reach the second dorsal fin.

V

Atlantic bonito

(*Sarda sarda*)

L A distinctive, compressed body, up to 75 cm in length.

Grey in colour with dark stripes angled across the back of the fish.



7-10 grey finlets are present between the last dorsal and anal fins and the crescent-shaped caudal fin.

Unlike other tuna, this fish lacks teeth along the roof of its mouth.

V

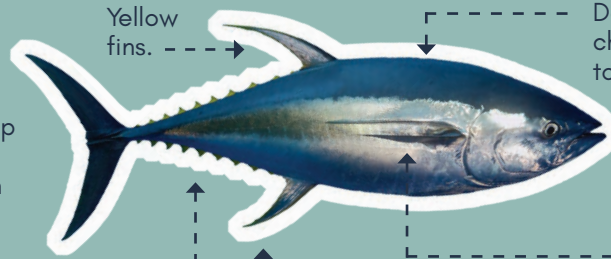
Image credit: © Nosyrevy/shutterstock.com

Yellowfin tuna

(*Thunnus albacares*)

L Streamlined body up to 2.4 m in length, slightly smaller than bigeye and bluefin tuna.

7-10 yellow finlets are present between the last dorsal and anal fins and the crescent-shaped caudal fin.



Dark blue in colour on top, changing to yellow, then to silver on the belly.

Pectoral fins are shorter than in an albacore yet longer than in a bluefin.

In mature individuals, the second dorsal fin and anal fin can become extremely elongated, reaching almost as far back as the tail.

Image credit: ©Brandon Cole/naturepl.com



END OF GUIDE.

If you have accidentally bycaught any of the species in this guide:

- Firstly, make a note of the identified species on page 41.
- Thereafter, turn to the reporting pages (39 - 40) to report the incident.

Voluntary reporting = you can submit information about the animal(s) accidentally bycaught.



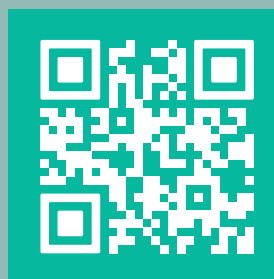
DO YOU WANT TO SUPPORT MARINE WILDLIFE MONITORING AND CONSERVATION EFFORTS?



If you have accidentally bycaught any of the species in this guide, you can voluntarily submit information about the animal(s) caught via the Clean Catch UK (CCUK) Wildlife Bycatch Reporting App.

The data collected helps Clean Catch UK researchers to understand patterns of bycatch of sensitive marine species, and determine the best ways to reduce it.

For more information scan the below QR code or visit: <https://www.cleancatchuk.com/clean-catch-uk-launches-new-wildlife-bycatch-reporting-app/>



If you are interested in signing up to the app or finding out more about the work of Clean Catch UK, simply go to: www.cleancatchuk.com



Compulsory reporting = you must report the following species to the MMO.

C HAVE YOU ACCIDENTALLY CAUGHT A MARINE MAMMAL (DOLPHIN, PORPOISE, OR SEAL)?

If you have accidentally caught a marine mammal as bycatch, which has resulted in incidental mortality or injury to the animal (for marine mammals, please refer to the dolphin, porpoise, and seal chapters in this guide), you must report it to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), within 48 hours of the end of the fishing trip. Doing so is a mandatory requirement under fishing vessel licence conditions.

This can be done by completing a template form (available on the MMO website) and sending it to the MMO using the following email or postal address:

Email: statistics@marinemangement.org.uk

Postal address:

MMO Statistics,
Lancaster House,
Hampshire Court,
Newcastle upon Tyne,
NE4 7YH

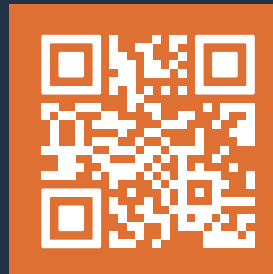
Please scan the QR code or go to this link to download the template form or to find out more about reporting marine mammal bycatch: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/marine-mammal-bycatch-reporting-requirements>

! FAO CODES:

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) provides a unique 3-letter code to identify marine animals to streamline the reporting process of bycatch incidents.

Find the FAO code for each marine mammal listed below.

Bottlenose dolphin - DBO
Short-beaked common dolphin - DCO
Harbour porpoise - PHR
Long-finned pilot whale - PIW
Risso's dolphin - DRR
Striped dolphin - DST
White-beaked dolphin - BWD
Atlantic white-sided dolphin - DWH
Common (Harbour) seal - SEC
Grey seal - SEG





Record any accidental catch
for a personal reference.

MARK AND NOTE

Use this section of the guide to record any accidental catch for personal reference. It may be useful to record the name of the identified species, time and location, and any further descriptions to refer to in the future.



If you have accidentally caught a marine mammal as bycatch please report it to the corresponding channels noted on page 40.

Identified Species	Date	Time	Location (or coordinates)	Reported?
<i>Example: 'Bottlenose dolphin'</i>	<i>12th Oct 2023</i>	<i>05:32am</i>	<i>Sound of Jura</i>	<i>Yes - MMO</i>

Identified Species	Date	Time	Location (or coordinates)	Reported?

Identified Species	Date	Time	Location (or coordinates)	Reported?

Developed and designed by
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**Clean
Catch UK**



Centre for Environment
Fisheries & Aquaculture
Science