

Strandings - how you can help?

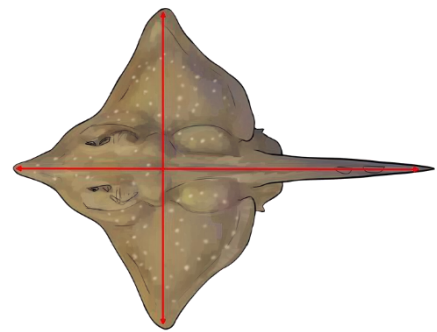
When you find a dead stranding, as well as a photograph, it would be really useful if you could collect some further information and samples for DNA and age/growth studies we support. If you are willing to do this, it will involve you returning to the dead skate (if it is still there) and removing some tissue and a vertebrae for us (they have annual growth rings rather like a tree).

You will need a tape measure, a sharp knife, a pair of gloves (washing up gloves will be fine), some sandwich bags and space in your freezer to store the samples.

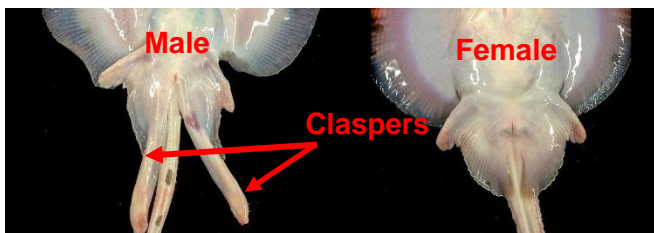
Please be very careful when cutting the skate and wash your hands well afterwards.

1. Measure the skate

Measure the total length of the skate, snout tip to tail tip and disc width, wing tip to wing tip. If possible please take a picture of the top side of the skate, showing as much of the body as possible.



2. Check if the skate is male or female



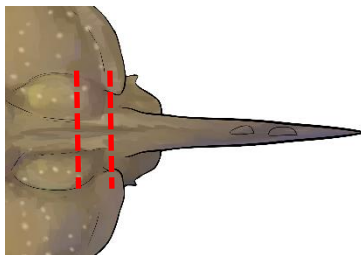
Look underneath the skate where the tail joins the body, males have 2 claspers, but these might be quite small, females don't. If possible, take a photo.

3. Take samples

DNA – if the skate is not too degraded

Remove the skin from an area of the skate that has not deteriorated and remove a small (1cm x 1cm x 1cm) amount of muscle, place it in a plastic bag (ideally in 2 bags), put it in the freezer and contact Cath Jones on c.s.jones@abdn.ac.uk.

Vertebrae – can be removed from a skate skeleton



Use a sharp knife to cut a section of the spine out near the top of the tail. This needs to be about 8cm in length between cuts. The vertebrae have natural gaps between them and will be easier to cut at these gaps, use the knife point to find them. Place the sample in a plastic bag (ideally 2 or 3 bags to prevent leakage and smells!) and freeze. Contact James Thorburn on jat21@st-andrews.ac.uk.