RAYS AND SKATES

Small-eyed ray

Raja microocellata Also known as painted ray

Caught off the Sussex coast | Confirmed record



Small-eyed ray (*Raja microocellata*). Picture: Sytske Dijksen (Ecomare), CC BY-SA 4.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0), via Wikimedia Commons: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ecomare_-_kleinoogroog_in_zeeaquarium_(kleinoogrog-zeeaquarium-00-sd).jpg.

IN SHORT

The small-eyed ray, also called the painted ray, is a neat and rather handsome fish. Kestrel Warrior names small-eyed ray among the rays that matter most to anglers off Sussex. British boat record: confirmed.

Key facts

IDENTIFY IT
Short pointed snout and small eyes. Grey, green or brown with small dark dots and pale lines across the body. White underside.

SIZE
Up to about 3 ft and 20 lb. Shore catches are usually 2-6 lb; 5 lb is a good shore fish.

HABITAT
Sandy, muddy and light shingle seabeds, coming into shallow water and sometimes estuaries. Mainly south and west Britain; absent from much of the North Sea.

OFF SUSSEX
Recorded off Sussex; no months in our sources

AROUND BRITAIN
No months in our sources

METHODS
Clipped-down single-hook rigs, 1/0 to 3/0 hook. Baits include peeler crab, ragworm, mackerel strip, herring and squid. Long casts may be needed from the shore.

GROUP
Rays and skates

COME FISHING WITH US

Fish with Kestrel Warrior from Brighton Marina

Where you might meet small-eyed ray with Captain Ant:

- **Drift for small-eyed ray on the flatfish trip** (8 hours drifting the sandbanks; 8 hours, £90 per person or £700 whole boat)

Free tuition and free gutting and filleting of your catch. Rod hire £10 per person; fishing tackle is included on the shark trip. Prices 2027 from £20 per person: kestrelwarrior6.co.uk/charter-boat-fishing-prices/

Book: ring **07896 471691** (8am to 9pm, seven days a week) · info@kestrelwarrior6.co.uk · kestrelwarrior6.co.uk/contact/

Scan to book

About the small-eyed ray

The small-eyed ray, also called the painted ray, is a neat and rather handsome fish. It has a short pointed snout and small eyes. The back is grey, green or brown, marked with small dark dots and pale lines across the body, and the underside is white.

It grows to about 3 ft and 20 lb. Fish caught from the shore are usually 2 to 6 lb, and a 5 lb fish is counted as a good one. It lives over sandy, muddy and light shingle seabeds, coming into shallow water and sometimes into estuaries. In Britain you find it mainly in the south and west, and it is absent from much of the North Sea.

The IUCN lists it as Near Threatened, and it is in decline, so most anglers release them. Kestrel Warrior names the small-eyed ray among the rays that matter most to anglers off Sussex. If you are not sure what is on the line, look for the small dots, the pale lines and the white belly. Take a photograph if you can, then let it go.

On the boat

The record gives no months for Britain or for Sussex, so we cannot say when it is best to find one. The methods listed are clipped-down single-hook rigs with a 1/0 to 3/0 hook. Baits include peeler crab, ragworm, mackerel strip, herring and squid. The record notes that long casts may be needed from the shore, and it gives no boat marks or boat methods for this species. Kestrel Warrior lists it among the rays that matter to anglers off Sussex.

British boat-caught record

Confirmed record

Weight	17 lb 8 oz
Where	Off Watchet, North Somerset
When	1991
Angler	Mrs S Storey

Confirmed British boat-caught record: Mrs S Storey, 17 lb 8 oz, off Watchet, North Somerset, 1991. The official list gives the year only. The official weight-based boat records were frozen in June 2024, and newer boat claims must be measured (qualifying wingspan 100 cm).

Care and rules

The small-eyed ray is Near Threatened (IUCN) and in decline. Most anglers release them. One angling site quotes a 41 cm minimum size, but we have not confirmed that as an official figure. Rules change: check the current rules before you fish.

Did you know?

Painted ray is the alternative name for this species on British Sea Fishing. The boat record of 17 lb 8 oz, caught in 1991, is close to the roughly 20 lb the species is said to reach.

Sources: British Sea Fishing: Small Eyed Ray; BRFC Sea Fish Records, June 2026; Kestrel Warrior: undulate and thornback rays in Sussex waters. The full guide, with links to every source: kestrelwarrior6.co.uk/sea-fish-guide/small-eyed-ray/