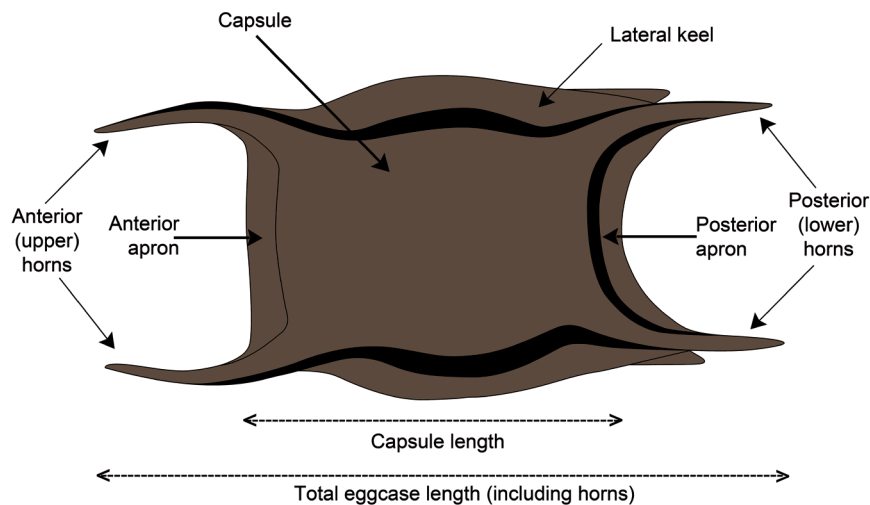


Eggcase Identification Key

The eggcases within this ID key can be found around the British Isles and northern Europe - use it to help you identify your finds and then report them to the Great Eggcase Hunt! We love to hear about finds outside of the UK too so please still record them! www.eggcase.org

Diagram of an Eggcase



Stranded eggcases can often be dry and brittle. Before identification, rehydrate your eggcase by soaking it in water (a few hours for the smaller species but overnight for the larger species). You'll see that it expands to its original, flexible state.

The approximate sizes used within this ID key are for soaked eggcases, and the eggcase images are displayed against an adult's hand.

1a Eggcase elongated and (if not broken) has curly tendrils extending from each corner.

Yes > Go to 2



1b Eggcase is squarer in shape and (if not broken) has a horn extending from each of corner of the capsule.

Yes > Go to 3

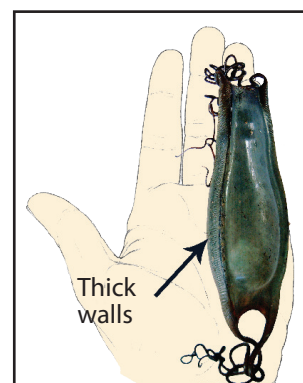


2a

Moderately large eggcase; approximate capsule length 8-10cm (excluding tendrils). Thick walls run the length of the capsule joining the two sides. Thick, curly tendrils extend from each corner.

Yes = Nursehound/Bull Huss (*Scyliorhinus stellaris*)

NB. Eggcase shape is similar to that of the Smallspotted Catshark (2b), however the Nursehound is much larger and more robust.



2b

Small eggcase; approximate capsule length 5-7cm (excluding tendrils). Fine, curly tendrils protrude from each corner. Colour should not be used as a distinguishing feature as it is highly variable for this species.

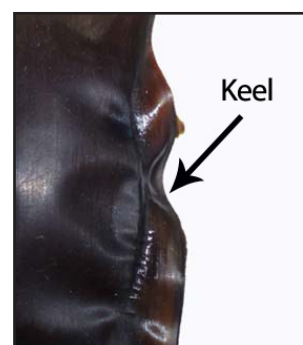
Yes = Smallspotted Catshark/Lesser Spotted Dogfish (*Scyliorhinus canicula*)



3a

Keels are present on the eggcase.

Yes > Go to 4



3b

No lateral keels, however a small fringe may be present.

No > Go to 9



4a

Eggcase capsule (excluding horns) greater than 13cm.

Yes > Go to 5



4b Eggcase capsule (excluding horns) less than 13cm.

Yes > Go to 6

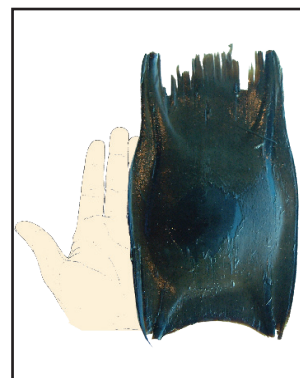


5a

Very large eggcase; approximate capsule length 15-20cm. Capsule surface covered with dense fibrous bark-like substance that easily peels away. Proximal field is long and usually ragged. West Scotland & Isles.

Yes = Flapper (or Common) Skate (*Dipturus intermedia*)

NB. This species has very limited distribution and is mainly found along the West Coast of Scotland and Northern Isles. Please submit photographs for verification.



5b

Very large robust eggcase; approximate capsule length 13cm and total length (with horns) 20cm. Prominent upper horns, short hooked lower horns. Celtic Sea.

Yes = White Skate (*Rostroraja alba*)

NB. This species has limited distribution in NE Atlantic and is rarely recorded. Please submit photographs for verification.

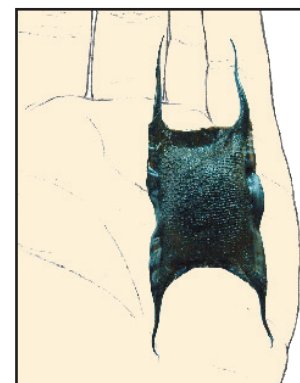


6a

Eggcase is very small; approximate capsule length 3.5 - 4.5cm. Capsule has longitudinal striations and latitudinal ridges giving a 'washboard' texture. North Sea coasts.

Yes = Starry Skate (*Amblyraja radiata*)

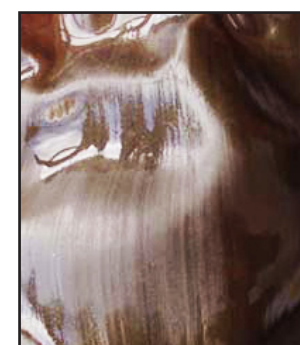
NB. Deep-water offshore species resident in the North Sea, eggcase findings tend to be restricted to the NE coastline. Please submit photographs for verification.



6b

Capsule body appears smooth. Striations may or may not be present and should not be confused with the 'washboard' texture.

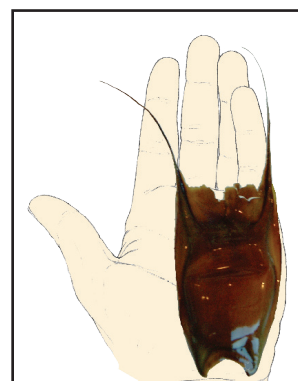
Yes > Go to 7



7a

Capsule tapers from top to bottom. If upper horns are intact, they are long and filamentous whereas lower horns are short and hooked. Approximate capsule length 7.5cm. Southern and Southwest coasts.

Yes = Small-eyed Ray (*Raja microocellata*)



7b

Capsule not as above and is squarer/rectangular in shape.

Yes > Go to 8

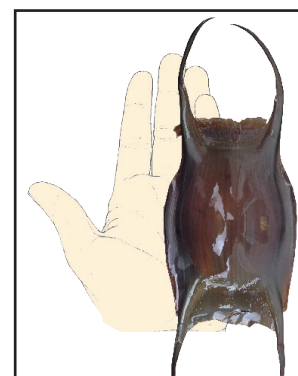


8a

Large eggcase; approximate capsule length 10-12cm. Often has a distinctive pinch at the base of the upper horns.

Yes = Blonde Ray (*Raja brachyura*)

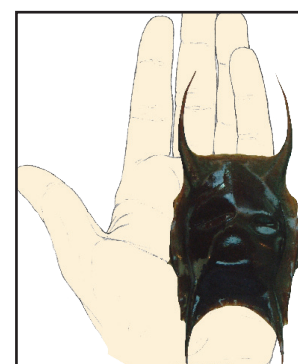
NB. Horns often broken by time of stranding. Large, fresh specimens are often confused with Common Skate eggcases (5a).



8b

Moderate sized eggcase; approximate capsule length 6 - 7cm. Shape can vary between being square and rectangular. Robust eggcase with well-formed keels and horns. Widespread distribution.

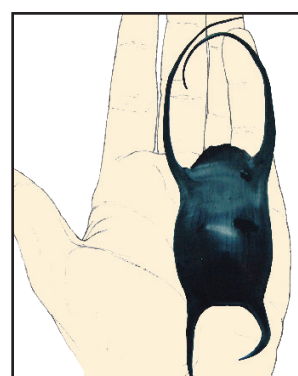
Yes = Thornback Ray (*Raja clavata*)



9a

Eggcase capsule small and rounded; approximate capsule length 5 - 6cm. Upper horns (if intact) are very long and curved.

Yes = Cuckoo Ray (*Leucoraja naevus*)



9b

Upper and lower horns are approximately equal length (if intact).

Yes > Go to 10



10a

Moderately large eggcase; approximate capsule length 7-8cm. Small fringe may be present along the margin with additional fibres often present. South coast of UK.

Yes = Undulate Ray (*Raja undulata*)

NB. Similar in appearance to Spotted Ray eggcase (10b) & can often be confused due to an overlap of size and a cross-over of species range. However the Undulate Ray is generally larger and distribution is limited to the south coast of the UK.



10b

Small, neat eggcase; approximate capsule length 5-6cm.

Yes = Spotted Ray (*Raja montagui*)

NB. Similar in appearance to Undulate Ray eggcase (10a) and can often be confused due to an overlap of size and a cross-over of species range. Spotted Ray is generally smaller and has a nationwide distribution.

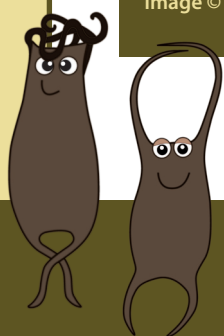


Image © Rachel Coppock.

Congratulations on identifying your eggcase!

You can now submit your record using the Shark Trust online recording form or via the iPhone or Android smartphone app - please include photos so we can verify your finds!

If you're having any difficulties identifying your eggcase then take a look at our **identification troubleshooter**, or get in touch with us at: enquiries@sharktrust.org.



Thank you for taking part in the Great Eggcase Hunt!



www.eggcase.org