

**START HERE**  
Does your EGG CASE look like this OR this?

The shark cases can vary in colour: cream, brown or almost black.

Is it BIG?  
OR  
Is it SMALL?

Does it have a keel?

YES  
Keel present

NO  
No keel

Is the CAPSULE LESS than 13cm?  
OR  
Is the CAPSULE MORE than 13cm?

The Flapper skate and the White skate egg cases are rare to find. Both of these cases are shown at approx. half of their normal size!

This capsule is similar to the Spotted skate's egg case, but is larger with fibres on the edges

The bottom horns curl upwards

This capsule is small and rounded

Large egg case with a pinch at base of horns

The capsule gets smaller at the bottom

This case has four horns that are similar lengths

Use the ruler to measure your egg case.



**Undulate skate**  
*Raja undulata*  
7-9cm

**Spotted skate**  
*Raja montagui*  
5-8cm

**Cuckoo skate**  
*Leucoraja naevus*  
5-7cm

**Small-spotted catshark**  
*Scyliorhinus canicula*  
4-6cm

**Nursehound shark**  
*Scyliorhinus stellaris*  
8-10cm

**Flapper skate**  
*Dipturus intermedius*  
13-24cm

**White skate**  
*Rostroraja alba*  
13-19cm

**Blonde skate**  
*Raja brachyura*  
10-13cm

**Small-eyed skate**  
*Raja microocellata*  
5-8cm

**Thornback skate**  
*Raja clacata*  
5-9cm



### Did you know...

Rays don't lay egg cases – they give birth to their young.

In the past, 'rays' became a common word that was used to describe both skates and rays. Now, some rays - that are really skates - still have a 'ray' name. We are using their skate names.

Scientists are gathering and discovering new information about shark and skate species all of the time. Therefore, you might find slight variances in the sizes of the species and their egg cases.

### Be a Citizen Scientist!

Record your findings at Purse Search Ireland:  
<https://marinedimensions.ie/purse-search-ireland/>  
Don't forget to include the beach name and the date you found the mermaid's purse.

Soak your egg cases in water for a few hours to rehydrate them before identification.

## SHARK SPECIES



Small-spotted catshark  
*Scyliorhinus canicula*  
Max. length: 1m



Nursehound shark  
*Scyliorhinus stellaris*  
Max. length: 1.62m

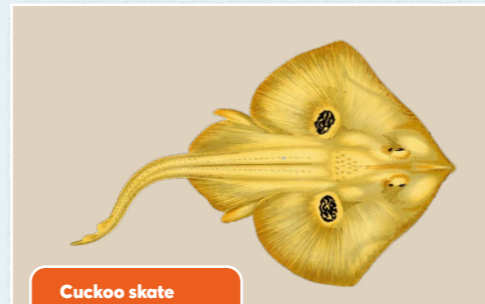
## SKATE SPECIES



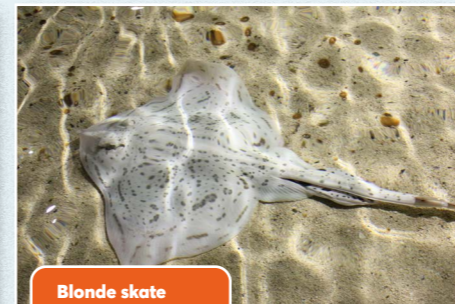
Undulate skate  
*Raja undulata*  
Max. length: 1.2m



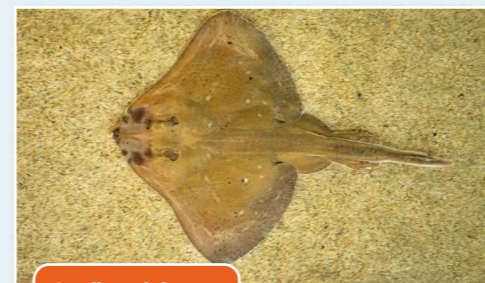
Spotted skate  
*Raja montagui*  
Max. length: 80cm



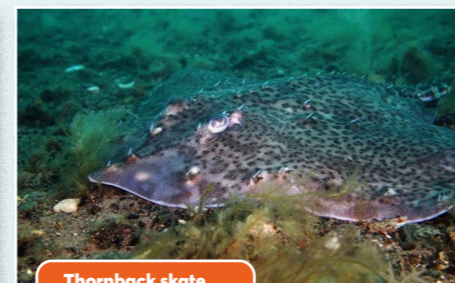
Cuckoo skate  
*Leucoraja naevus*  
Max. length: 81cm



Blonde skate  
*Raja brachyura*  
Max. length: 1.2m



Small-eyed skate  
*Raja microcellata*  
Max. length: 1.03m



Thornback skate  
*Raja clavata*  
Max. length: 1.3m



White skate  
*Rostroraja alba*  
Max. length: 2.4m



Flapper skate  
*Dipturus intermedius*  
Max. length: 2.5m

Key designed by Cushla Dromgool-Regan and Mona McCrea

We have used data from Elbert, D. A. & Dando, M. (2021) *Sharks, Rays & Chimaeras of Europe and the Mediterranean and sharktrust.org*. For more fun facts about sharks and skates, check out the Explorers FinTastic Sharks+ An Introduction to Elasmobranchs for Children

Images: iStock Photography, Alamy Stock Photography, Cushla Dromgool-Regan, Mona McCrea, Jonathan White.

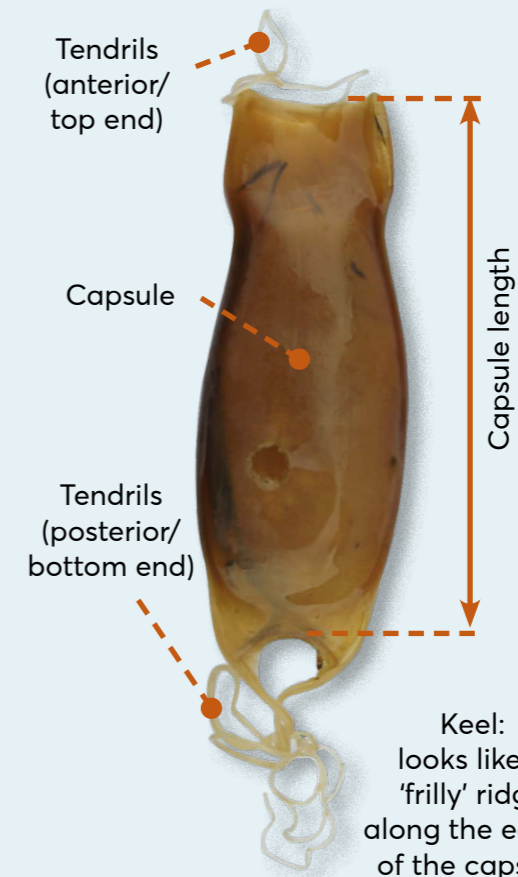


EXPLORERS  
FIN-TASTIC  
SHARKS +

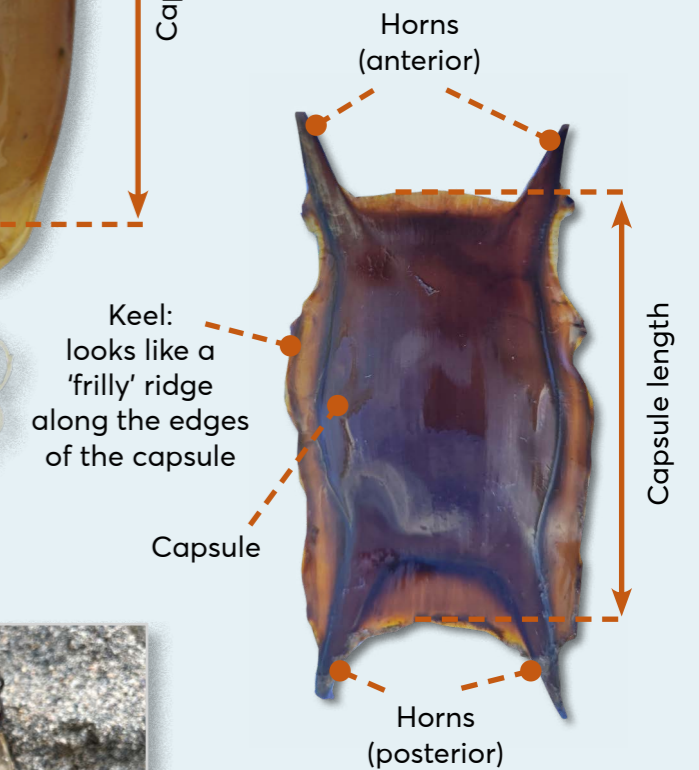
## MERMAID'S PURSE Identification Key

ALL SKATES and SOME SHARKS reproduce by laying egg cases. These are called **MERMAID'S PURSES**. Empty egg cases can be found amongst the washed up seaweed on the upper shoreline.

### FEATURES OF A SHARK EGG CASE



### FEATURES OF A SKATE EGG CASE



Check the egg case for an opening slit at the top between the tendrils or horns. This is where the pup hatched out.