



COWNOSE RAY *(Rhinoptera bonasus)*

1. COWNOSE RAYS ARE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO OVERFISHING AND TYPICALLY ONLY HAVE ONE PUP IN THEIR LITTER ANNUALLY OR BIANNUALLY. THEY DO NOT MATURE UNTIL AROUND 7-8 YEARS AND CAN LIVE UP TO 13 YEARS IN THE CHESAPEAKE BAY, US.
2. COWNOSE RAYS MIGRATION PATTERNS IN THE ATLANTIC INCLUDE A NORTHWARD MOVEMENT IN THE LATE SPRING AND SOUTHWARD MOVEMENTS IN THE LATE FALL. THEIR RANGE EXTENDS FROM NEW ENGLAND IN THE US AND DOWN TO BRAZIL AND PARTS OF THE CARIBBEAN.
3. THEIR DIET INCLUDES FISH, MOLLUSKS, CRABS, LOBSTERS, GASTROPODS AND BIVALVES.
4. COWNOSE RAYS ARE OFTEN BLAMED FOR THE DECREASE IN SHELLFISH ON THE EAST COAST OF THE US, BUT A RECENT DIET STUDY (BADE ET AL 2014) SHOWED NO SCALLOPS IN COWNOSE RAY STOMACHS. BOW FISHING TOURNAMENTS HAVE RECENTLY BECOME POPULAR IN MD SINCE THE COWNOSE RAY IS OFTEN SEEN AS A NUISANCE BY FISHERMEN. THE NOW POPULAR PHRASE, "SAVE THE BAY, EAT A RAY", IS NOT INFORMED BY SCIENCE OR THE BIOLOGY OF THE COWNOSE RAY. THERE IS A TARGETED COWNOSE RAY FISHERY IN VIRGINIA, AND IN CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA.
5. MORE RESEARCH IS NEEDED TO FULLY UNDERSTAND THE MIGRATION PATTERNS, ESSENTIAL HABITAT AND NURSERY AREAS, AND TO ESTIMATE POPULATION SIZE AND BYCATCH LEVELS.

