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First records of benthic resting behaviour in the Pacific eagle ray *Aetobatus laticeps* from the eastern Pacific Ocean

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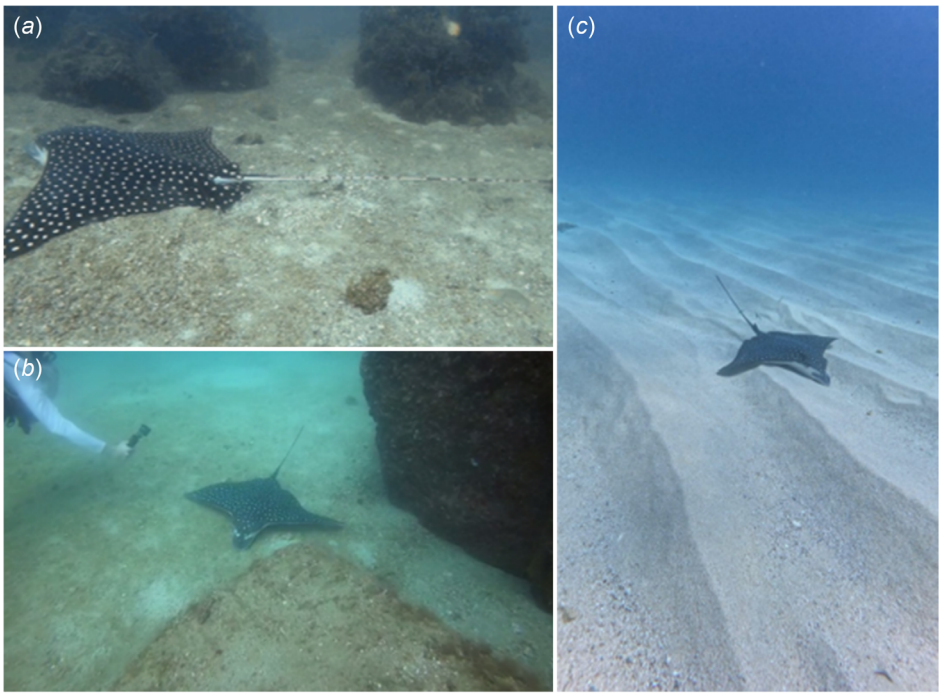


Fig. 1. First records of benthic resting behaviour in the Pacific eagle ray *Aetobatus laticeps* from the eastern Pacific Ocean: (*a*) Tortuga Island, Costa Rica; (*b*) Banderas Bay, Mexico; (*c*) El Chileno Bay, Mexico. Photographs by (*a*) Michael Graversgaard, (*b*) Rodolfo Rojas, (*c*) Aurora Leal.

Keywords: behavioural ecology, benthic habitat use, citizen science, coastal ecosystems, elasmobranch behaviour, marine megafauna, natural history, opportunistic observations.

Studies have previously documented benthic resting behaviour in spotted eagle rays, including *Aetobatus narinari* (Flowers and Kelley 2020) and *Aetobatus ocellatus* (Araujo *et al.* 2024). Such behaviour had not been confirmed for *Aetobatus laticeps*, which can be found on the Pacific coast from Mexico to Eucador. Here, we report the first confirmed records of benthic resting in this species from three observations from citizen-science programs, which are increasingly recognised as valuable tools to obtain scientific information (Paiz *et al.* 2025).

The observations occurred in Tortuga Island, Costa Rica (9.773523, −84.891411) on 16 February 2022; Banderas Bay, Mexico (20.533610, −105.296713) on 21 August 2022; and El Chileno Bay, Baja California Sur, Mexico (22.948849, −109.805245) on 12 December 2025. The individuals remained stationary for 80 s (Fig. 1*a*); 7 s (Fig. 1*b*) and 180 s (Fig. 1*c*) respectively. The sightings' depths were 9–12 m at times between 9:00 h and 15:00 h. They adopted a benthic resting posture on sandy substrates with no feeding pits, sediment disturbance or visible injuries. All observations were made by recreational divers.

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All three observations match benthic resting behaviour reported in other spotted eagle ray species (Flowers and Kelley 2020; Araujo *et al.* 2024). They represent the first verified records for *A. laticeps* and suggest that benthic resting may be more widespread within the spotted eagle rays and merits further investigation. The records also allow to hypothesise that benthic habitat use extends beyond just foraging. As citizen science generated all records, this highlights the value of opportunistic observations and emphasises the need for continued integration of citizen science programs for species monitoring, particularly for elusive elasmobranchs.

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