

**Ocean Sunfish***Mola mola*

Range: *Mola mola* has a cosmopolitan distribution, occurring in all oceans of tropical and temperate climates. In the western Atlantic ocean, they span from northern Florida to northern South America.

Similar Species: The Sharptail Mola (*Mola lanceolata*) has a body structure that is almost identical to that of *Mola mola*. However, unlike *M. mola*, *M. lanceolata* has an extended section of caudal fin that comes to a sharp point. Additionally, although these two species have much of the same coloration, *M. lanceolata* possesses much smoother skin and produces less mucus.

*Mola lanceolata*

Identification: *Mola mola* exhibits a truncated body structure with elongated dorsal and anal fins. The caudal fin, on the other hand, is broad and rounded. Their skin has a gritty texture and is generally covered with an abundant amount of mucus. *Mola mola* ranges in color from a dark brownish grey to silver and can exhibit changeable spotty patterns. This species holds the record for the heaviest bony fish, weighing as much as 4927 lbs (2235 kg) with a length as great as 10 ft (3.1m).

Note: *Mola mola* are often seen basking at the surface of the water. By exposing one side of their body to the water's surface, the Sunfish allows sea birds to feed on ectoparasites that infest their skin. Cleaner fish also aid in the removal of parasites by feasting on them.