



Photo Courtesy of "Marine Science Center"

**Spotted Moray Eel***Gymnothorax moringa*

**Range:** Wide spread in the western Atlantic, from Bermuda, the Bahamas, off the Carolinas, Florida, throughout the Caribbean Islands, off coastal Mexico and central and northern South America. *Gymnothorax moringa* is abundant in shallow rocky and grassy areas and on coral reefs. As a benthic species, it spends most of the time near the ocean floor. The Spotted Moray Eel is most often seen with its head protruding from a hole with the rest of its body concealed.

**Similar Species:** Juvenile *Gymnothorax moringa*, which lack the traditional spotted pattern of the adults and exhibit a white lower jaw, closely resembling juvenile Purplemouth Moray Eel, *Gymnothorax vicinus*.

**Identification:** The head, body, and tail of *Gymnothorax moringa* exhibit a pattern of small, overlapping, dark brown to purplish black spots giving it a mottled appearance on a pale yellow background. The overall pattern may vary in blotch size and color intensity. This species reaches a maximum length of 100cm (39.37 inches)

**Note:** *Gymnothorax moringa* constantly opens and closes its mouth as a means of respiring, and although this action may look aggressive, it is not a threat.