

Enormous rare sea creature hauled from depths by Florida shark fisherman

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Pete Thomas

Mark Quartiano has caught thousands of sharks, and hooked clients up with thousands more. In fact, the Florida captain is famously known as [Mark the Shark](#).

But until Saturday, Mark the Shark had not encountered anything quite like the monstrous skate that he described as looking “like some kind of dinosaur.”

It was a rare catch for an angler, indeed. Quartiano said this shark relative’s scientific name is *Dactylobatus clarkii*, and a quick Internet search revealed very little information about the

species. However, on Monday, [George H. Burgess](#) of the Florida Museum of Natural History identified the creature as a roughtail stingray with the scientific name, *Dasyatis centroura*.



Photos of this rare sea creature, which was released after being caught, are courtesy of Mark Quartiano

resides
in deeper



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continental shelf waters of the U.S. East Coast from off the Carolinas south to Uruguay, and in the eastern Atlantic.

"Most anglers don't bottom-fish in these deeper waters so they aren't routinely seen by that user group, but commercial longline fishers and research biologists see the critter fairly commonly," Burgess said. "Obviously large adults like this require heavy fishing gear and strong backs—they aren't great fighters, but they weight a bunch and are prone to suck their body onto the bottom like a kiddie arrow tip. Once the suction is broken it's basically a matter of hoisting up a big weight."

Quartiano, who was fishing with a Japanese film crew, had dropped a whole bonito to the bottom off Miami Beach. Before long, line began to spin from his reel.

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"I was fishing at about 500 feet and we were trying to catch a shark for their TV show," the captain said. "I hooked that monster and it took about four hours to bring it up. At first I thought it was a large thresher shark, because that's kind of the way they fight."

One of the film crew had underwater gear and captured footage that will be released later this year or early next year, Quartiano said.

Quartiano's crew winched the giant creature out of the water for "three or four minutes" for a photo opportunity, then set it free. Mark the Shark estimated its weight at 800 pounds.

"It was a big female and she swam away pretty quickly," he said. "It was kind of cool to catch something new for a change. ... When we first saw it we didn't know what it was. It looked really odd ... like some kind of dinosaur."

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