

# Life Under Water

## Laced moray



The **laced moray** (*Gymnothorax favagineus*), also called the leopard moray, tessellate moray or honeycomb moray, is a marine fish species that belongs to the family Muraenidae, better known as the moray eels. The laced moray is one of larger moray eels, and can reach up to a length of 300 cm. The name of the genus comes from the Greek *gymnos* = naked and *thorax* = breast, referring to the lack of scales on the fishes in this genus. It has a fairly wide distribution in the tropical waters of the Indian and Pacific oceans from the eastern coast of Africa to Papua New Guinea and from south Japan to the Australian Great Barrier Reef. It is a carnivorous, nocturnal predator that hunts smaller fish, crabs and octopuses using ambush techniques. During the day it is found on the outer slopes and in the crevices of coral reefs. Like many moray eels, the laced moray also accumulates ciguatoxins in its tissues, due to which the fish is not considered edible for human consumption. Ciguatoxins build up in fish when they consume toxic single-celled marine organisms called dinoflagellates, or eat other fish that have fed on dinoflagellates. The larval stage of the laced moray is very long and may even extend over a year. As their growth is very slow, the species is now considered to be endangered.

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Photo Credit: **Mayukh Dey**