

Q: While fishing off Miami Beach in approximately 1,000 feet of water, I caught this bizarre-looking fish that resembles a giant triggerfish. Can you identify this creature, and tell me if they get larger than this?

— Dan DeBonis, Miami, Florida

A: The fish is a sharptail mola (*Masturus lanceolatus*), one of three species of molas that inhabit the world's oceans. Sharptail molas can grow much larger than the individual you caught. They've been reported to attain lengths greater than 10 feet and weights of more than 2 tons, making this species one of the two heaviest bony fishes in the ocean. The other heaviest is the mola's close relative, the ocean sunfish. Despite lacking normal caudal fins, they can move swiftly and powerfully by sculling with their dorsal and anal fins. In fact, they can develop enough momentum to jump completely out of the water!

Ray Waldner



Sharptail molas can grow much larger than this one. They can weigh more than 2 tons.