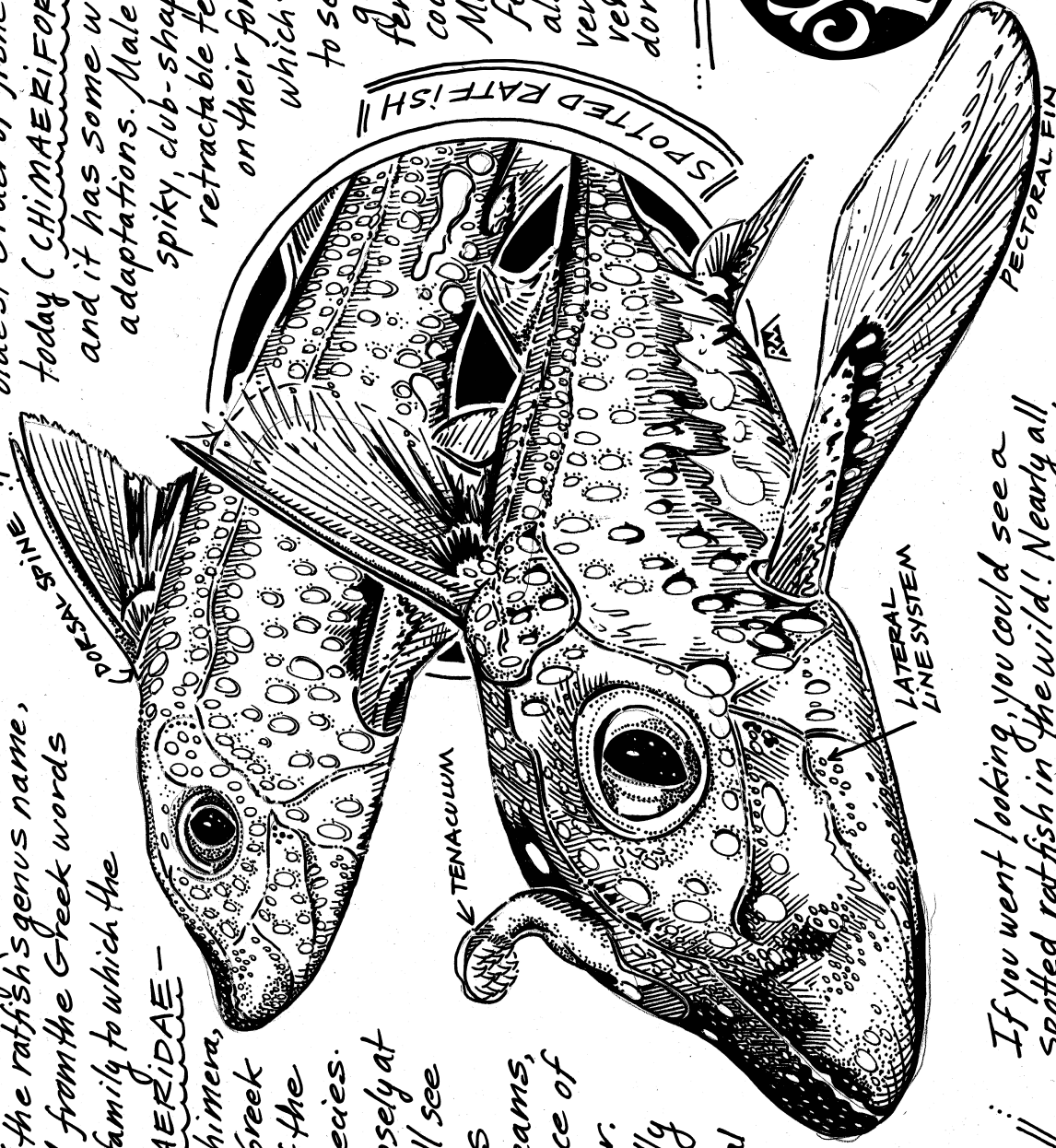


These amazing creatures are SPOTTED RATFISH (*Hydrolagus collicii*), also called ghost sharks, spook fish, and rabbit fish (the ratfish's genus name, *Hydrolagus*, is derived from the Greek words for water hare). The family to which the ratfish belongs - CHIMAERIDAE - is named after the Chimera, a beast from ancient Greek mythology composed of the body parts of other species.

Why? Well, if you look closely at the spotted ratfish, you'll see that it has lines over its surface that look like seams, giving it the appearance of being stitched together. These lines are actually a collection of sense organs called the lateral line system that allows the ratfish to detect movement in the surrounding water, helping it find food and avoid predators.

How COOL is that?!

The ratfish is a member of the oldest Order of fishes alive today (CHIMAERIFORMES), and it has some wacky adaptations. Males have a spiky, club-shaped, and retractable tenaculum on their foreheads, which they use to securely grasp females during courtship. Males and females also have a very sharp, venomous dorsal spine.



If you went looking, you could see a spotted ratfish in the wild! Nearly all members of the Chimaeridae family are deep-ocean fishes, but spotted ratfish are equally at home in relatively shallow intertidal waters.

creature
feature

