

Musick co-authors first field guide to Chesapeake Bay fishes

By David Malmquist

(March 18, 2013) Professor Emeritus Jack Musick of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science has co-authored a new book—*Field Guide to Fishes of the Chesapeake Bay*—which publisher Johns Hopkins Press calls an “indispensable resource for both anglers and students.”

The 346-page field guide—co-authored by Dr. Ed Murdy of the National Science Foundation—describes all of the Bay’s native and introduced fishes, with detailed information about their key features, habitat, range, reproduction, food habits, occurrence in the Bay, and importance to fisheries. It opens with an in-depth description of the Bay’s watershed and history, and includes an illustrated key to fish morphology.

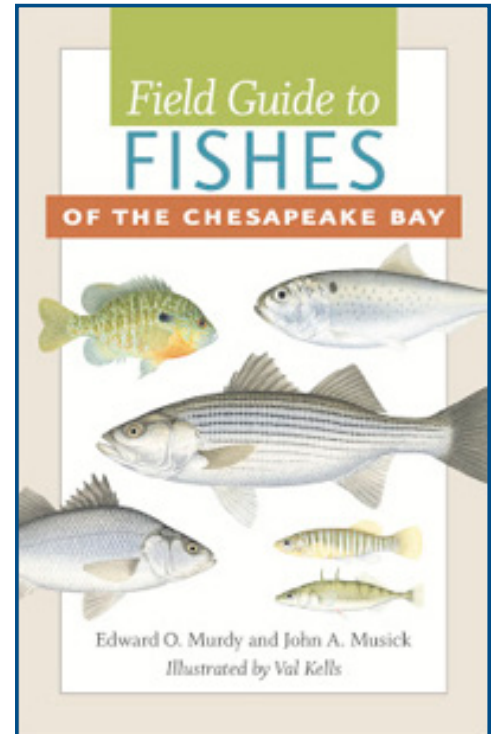
Detailed species keys, a glossary, and an index aid identification of all 211 species found between the Bay’s headwaters and its mouth at the Atlantic. The species descriptions are accompanied by 227 full-color illustrations by Val Kells, a noted marine science illustrator whose previous work includes *A Field Guide to Coastal Fishes: from Maine to Texas*.

Musick says the book covers “All but the rarest species encountered in the Bay,” and adds “even these are listed in an Appendix.” He notes that most of the species records are based on specimens in the Nunnally Ichthyology Collection at VIMS, and that “many of these specimens were collected in the course of VIMS’ ongoing trawl and seine surveys.”

The VIMS Fish Collection—established in 1951—now contains approximately 20,000 cataloged lots of fishes comprising 128,000 specimens in 247 families. Individuals and institutions around the world use the collection for research, education, and training.

Early praise for the book comes from Dennis Doyle of *Bay Weekly*, who writes “This work is a must have for anglers, naturalists, scientists, outdoors people and anyone who just loves the Chesapeake Bay. Authors (and scientists) Murdy and Musick should be congratulated for such a comprehensive effort and the illustrations of artist Val Kells are nothing short of extraordinary.”

John Page Williams, Senior Naturalist for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, writes that the guide “will enrich the time anyone spends on the waters of the Chesapeake, from the freshwater head of tide on the rivers to the salty Virginia Capes and the Atlantic. The science is solid, as it should be from two veteran bay ichthyologists, but it also carries an engaging human touch that brings each species to life through brief but informative paragraphs



Cover image of *Field Guide to Fishes of the Chesapeake Bay*. Image courtesy of Johns Hopkins University Press.

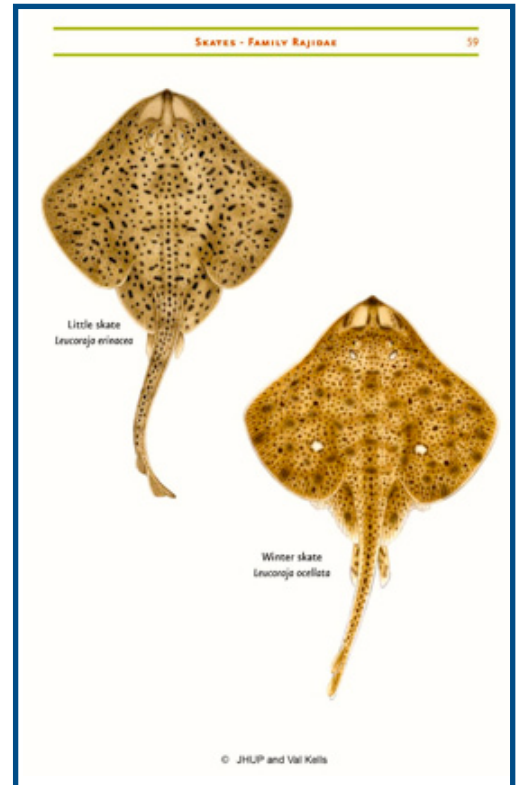
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on where and how often it turns up in the Chesapeake, what it eats, and why it is important ecologically, commercially, and recreationally.”

Musick and Murdy had previously partnered with the late Ray Birdsong to author *Fishes of Chesapeake Bay* (Smithsonian Institution Press), a hardbound reference to the fishes of the nation’s largest estuary. Musick says *Field Guide to Fishes of the Chesapeake Bay* is “a new and different book from a different publisher, with all new text and format and all new and original color figures. As its name and compact size attest, it’s meant for use in the field.”

Field Guide to Fishes of the Chesapeake Bay is available for online ordering through the publisher and major book retailers, and will be available through the VIMS Gift Shop in the near future.



An example of the field guide’s full-color images. Image courtesy of Val Kells.