

Species Showdown: Spotted wobbegong vs. banded wobbegong

By Dave Harasti



SPOTTED WOBBERGONG

Orectolobus maculatus



BANDED WOBBERGONG

Orectolobus halei

Taxonomy	Family: Orectolobidae	Family: Orectolobidae
Distribution	Found in the waters of southern Australia from southern Queensland to southwestern Western Australia.	Found in southern Australia between Southport, Queensland, and Norwegian Bay, Western Australia.
Morphology	The spotted wobbegong can be recognised by the dermal lobes (skin flaps) around the snout margin and the distinctive colour pattern of dark saddles and white rings on a yellow to greenish-brown background. It has six to 10 dermal lobes split into three pre-orbital groups below and in front of the eyes on each side of the head. This species is easily differentiated from the banded wobbegong by the white coloured rings on its body rather than the blue-grey rings of the banded wobbegong.	The banded wobbegong is a large species with no warty tubercles on its head or body. It can be recognised by body shape and colouration. It has a broad, flattened head, and there are four groups of dermal lobes below and in front of the eyes on each side of the head. The species is usually golden-brown with broad dark areas, and with bluish-grey spots above. Covered in an intricate pattern dominated by nine dark irregular saddles edged with black lines, the banded wobbegong is pale below. The margins of the fins often have dark spots.
Size	Grows to at least 3.2 metres.	Grows to at least three metres.
Food	Wobbegongs are ambush predators that lie in wait for any passing unsuspecting prey. They have been seen to feed on other shark species, including other wobbegongs as well as cuttlefish, octopus, and other fish species.	
Similar Species	There are several types of wobbegong species, the most common of which is the tasselled wobbegong (<i>Eucrossorhinus dasypogon</i>), often seen hiding on coral reefs. The ornate wobbegong (<i>Orectolobus ornatus</i>) is very similar to the banded wobbegong, however the ornate can be recognised by its different colouration, fewer dermal lobes at the posterior pre-orbital group, a smaller head, and grows to a smaller adult size.	
Fun Fact	<i>Wobbegong</i> is an Australian aboriginal word meaning "shaggy beard."	