

Blind Shark, *Brachaelurus waddi*

Report Card assessment	Sustainable		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Least Concern (Endemic to Australia)	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Least Concern
Assessors	Kyne, P. & Bennet, M.		
Australian Assessors	Kyne, P.M., Heupel, M.R., White, W.T. & Simpfendorfer, C.A. (Shark Action Plan)		
Report Card Remarks	Relatively common species, bycatch in trap fisheries with refuge in rocky reefs.		

Summary

The Blind Shark is endemic to the east coast of Australia. No detailed information is available on current population trends, but it is a relatively common species. It is not targeted by commercial or recreational fisheries, but is bycatch in trap fisheries in New South Wales waters. Research is required to assess bycatch levels. It is also popular in the marine aquarium trade, but current exploitation levels are unknown. It appears to be capable of surviving out of water for extended periods, thus post-capture survival may be high. Although research suggests that it has limited reproductive potential, the species remains common and likely finds protection from fisheries in typically unfished habitats such as rocky shorelines and reefs. Therefore, the Blind Shark is assessed as Least Concern (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021) and Sustainable (SAFS).



Distribution

The Blind Shark is endemic to the east coast of Australia in warm temperate and subtropical waters. It is found from Mooloolaba (Queensland) and to Jervis Bay (New South Wales) (Johnson 1999, Last and Stevens 2009).

Stock structure and status

There is no information on Blind Shark population size or structure, however it is relatively common throughout its range.

Fisheries

The Blind Shark is likely taken as bycatch in demersal prawn trawl fisheries in NSW (Ocean Prawn Trawl Fishery) and Queensland (East Coast Trawl Fishery) in small numbers. The species is also regularly caught by commercial trap fishing in NSW (Norén 2013). However, the species is not targeted (Last and Stevens 2009) as its flesh is reported to be unpalatable (Grant 1978). Recreational fishing is thought to have little effect on the species (Rose and SAG 2001). The Blind Shark is generally not retained and is probably mostly returned to the water (Dave Pollard, pers. comm., 2003). Moreover, the Blind Shark is able to remain out of water for extended periods of time (up to 18 hours) (Michael 1993, Last and Stevens 2009). This implies that the species could survive trawl capture more readily than other species if successfully returned to the water. The species is also exploited at low levels for the marine aquarium trade, but it is reportedly hardy and well suited to aquarium display (Michael 2001). The exact level of pressure placed on the population by this trade is unknown. Collectively, these fisheries and interactions are believed to have a minimal effect on the population.

Habitat and biology

The Blind Shark is a cryptic, nocturnal, bottom-dwelling shark that is found on rocky shorelines and reefs, and also nearby seagrass beds. The species occurs on the continental shelf from the intertidal zone to 140 m depth (Last and Stevens 2009). It is found in rocky caves and under ledges during the day, and moves out to feed at night. It has a maximum size of 120 cm total length (TL), but individuals are usually much smaller than this maximum. Males mature at 58 cm TL and females at 50 cm TL (Norén 2013). Its maximum age is estimated to be 19 years (Norén 2013).

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: estimated 19 years Max size: 120 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: 58 cm TL Females: 50 cm TL

CAAB Code: 37 013007

Link to IUCN Page: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/41732/68610784>

Link to page at Shark References: <http://shark-references.com/species/view/Brachaelurus-waddi>

References

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