

Western Looseskin Skate, *Insentiraja subtilispinosa*

Report Card assessment	Sustainable		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Least Concern	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Least Concern
Global Assessors	Huveneers, C., Stehmann, M.F.W. & Last, P.R.		
Australian Assessors	Kyne, P.M., Heupel, M.R., White, W.T., Simpfendorfer, C.A. (Shark Action Plan) & Rigby, C.L.		
Report Card Remarks	Australian fishing pressure low and significant refuge across its range.		

Summary

The Western Looseskin Skate is a small deepwater skate with a wide range across tropical to temperate waters in Western Australia and a patchy distribution in Southeast Asia. It is caught incidentally in deepwater trawl fisheries, and though there is no information on catches in Southeast Asia, fisheries likely do not operate at its main depth range. In Australia, it was frequently caught by trawlers targeting prawns and scampi in the 1990s but since then effort has significantly declined. It is likely currently caught in the Commonwealth Northwest Slope Trawl Fishery and Western Deepwater Trawl Fishery and likely released as it is of little commercial value; post-release mortality is unknown. However, both fisheries have limited effort and the species would receive considerable refuge at depth as it most abundant at 900–1,100 m which is beyond the maximum depth fished of 700 m. Chondrichthyans have been assessed as at low risk in these fisheries. The species would also receive refuge in the Commonwealth North-west Marine Parks Network. Overall, in Australia, fishing effort is very low across its range where there is also significant spatial and depth refuge. Therefore, the Painted Maskray is assessed as Least Concern (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021) and in Australia, Sustainable (SAFS).



The Western Looseskin Skate occurs in tropical to temperate waters of Western Australia and in Indonesia (Kalimantan) and northern Philippines (Last et al. 2016). In Western Australia, it has a broad range, occurring from Ashmore Reef to Lancelin (Last and Stevens 2009).

Distribution

The Western Looseskin Skate occurs in tropical to temperate waters of Western Australia and in Indonesia (Kalimantan) and northern Philippines (Last et al. 2016). In Western Australia, it has a broad range, occurring from Ashmore Reef to Lancelin (Last and Stevens 2009).

Stock structure and status

In the 1990s, the Western Looseskin Skate was possibly the most abundant skate at depths of 900–1,100 m across its known range (Last and Compagno 1998). However, since then there is no information on population structure or trend for the species.

Fisheries

The Western Looseskin Skate is caught incidentally by deepwater trawl fisheries. There is no information on catch or use in Indonesia or Philippines, though its main depth range is very likely beyond depths fished. In Australia, it was caught frequently by deepwater trawlers targeting prawns and scampi (*Metanephrops australiensis*) in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but since then deepwater trawl effort has declined considerably (Patterson et al. 2022). It is likely caught in the Commonwealth Northwest Slope Trawl Fishery (targets prawns and scampi at 200–600 m depths) and the Western Deepwater Trawl Fishery (targets finfish and bugs (*Ibacus* spp.) at 200–700 m depths. As it is of little commercial value, the Western Looseskin Skate is likely released and there is no information on post-release mortality. However, both fisheries have limited effort with only 1–6 active vessels (Patterson et al. 2022), and the species would receive considerable refuge at depth as it mostly occurs at 900–1,100 m depths. Chondrichthyans have been assessed as at low risk in these fisheries (Zhou et al. 2009). It would also receive refuge in the Commonwealth North-west Marine Parks Network that came into effect in 2018 which include zoning and gear restrictions. This network includes the Ashmore Reef Marine Park, which has been in place since the 1980s and is mostly a Sanctuary Zone where fishing is prohibited (Parks Australia 2023).

Habitat and biology

The Western Looseskin Skate is demersal on the insular and continental slopes at depths of 320–1,460 m but mostly occurs at 900–1,100 m depth (Last and Compagno 1998, Last et al. 2016). Maximum size is at least 57 cm total length (TL) with males mature at approximately 50 cm TL and females mature at 40–45 cm TL (Huveneers et al. 2015, Last et al. 2016). Little else is known of its biology.

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: at least 57 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: ~50 cm TL Females: 40–45 cm TL

CAAB Code: 37 031022

Link to IUCN Page: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/161553/68630712>

Link to page at Shark References: <https://shark-references.com/species/view/Insentiraja-subtilispinosa>

References

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