

## Ornate Numbfish, *Narcinops ornata*

<b>Report Card assessment</b>	<b>Sustainable</b>		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Least Concern (Endemic to Australia)	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Least Concern
Global Assessors	Rigby, C. & Simpfendorfer, C.		
Australian Assessors	Kyne, P.M., Heupel, M.R., White, W.T., Simpfendorfer, C.A. (Shark Action Plan) & Rigby, C.L.		
Report Card Remarks	Fishing pressure limited and significant refuge outside fished areas and in marine parks.		

### Summary

The Ornate Numbfish is a small demersal continental shelf ray endemic to tropical northern Australia. It may be incidentally caught in the Commonwealth Northern Prawn Fishery (NPF) and Northern Territory Demersal Fishery (DF). Elasmobranchs are prohibited from retention in the both fisheries though post-release mortality is unknown.



Bycatch Reduction Devices are mandatory in these fisheries though their effectiveness at excluding small rays such as this species is limited. However, this species occurs at depths beyond most of the trawl spatial and depth effort in its range and in the NPF it has been assessed as at low risk of being unsustainably fished. The species has significant refuge from fisheries through a combination of trawl closures and marine parks. Therefore, the Ornate Numbfish is assessed as Least Concern (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021) and Sustainable (SAFS).

### Distribution

The Ornate Numbfish is endemic to tropical northern Australia (Last et al. 2016). It occurs from western Cape York (Queensland) to Cape Londonderry (Western Australia) (Last and Stevens 2009).

### Stock structure and status

There is currently no information on population size, structure, or trend for the species.

### Fisheries

The Ornate Numbfish's range overlaps with the Commonwealth Northern Prawn Fishery (NPF) but it has not been reported in NPF bycatch surveys (Stobutzki et al. 2002), perhaps as most trawling operates at less than 40 m depth which is shallower than this species minimum depth. It may be encountered when the NPF vessels operate in deeper waters to 300 m depth targeting scampi

(*Metanephrops australiensis*), however such effort is low and highly sporadic (Rigby and Simpfendorfer 2015). Although bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) have been mandatory since 2000, their effectiveness is limited at excluding small rays such as this species (Griffiths et al. 2006). If caught it would be released as elasmobranch retention is now prohibited, though post-release survival is unknown. However, the Ornate Numbfish was considered at low risk of being unsustainably fished in the NPF as its range is mostly outside the fished area (Zhou and Griffiths 2008). The species may also be caught in the Northern Territory Demersal Fishery which uses trawls, has limited effort, and mandated BRDs (NTG 2019). It would be released as ray retention is prohibited. The species would receive refuge in the Commonwealth North-west and North Marine Parks Networks that came into effect in 2018 and also considerable refuge in state and territory waters; more than 90% of the area within the 200 m isobath of Western Australian northern waters may never have been trawled due to a combination of spatial trawl closures and marine parks, and considerable areas of Northern Territory are closed to trawling (Gaughan and Santoro 2021, Kyne et al. 2021, Park Australia 2023).

### Habitat and biology

The Ornate Numbfish is demersal on the continental shelf at depths of 48–132 m (Carvalho 2008, Last et al. 2016). Maximum size is at least 24 cm total length (TL) and males mature at approximately 17–18 cm TL and females likely mature at a similar size (Carvalho 2008). Nothing else is known of its biology.

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: at least 24 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Both sexes: ~17–18 cm TL

**CAAB Code:** 37 028007

**Link to IUCN Page:** <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/195462/68635178>

**Link to page at Shark References:** <https://shark-references.com/species/view/Narcinops-ornata>

### References

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