

Speckled Maskray, *Neotrygon picta*

Report Card assessment	Sustainable		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Least Concern	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Least Concern
Global Assessors	Pierce, S.J., White, W.T., Jacobsen, I.P., Barratt, P.J., Last, P.R. & Kyne, P.M.		
Australian Assessors	Kyne, P.M., Heupel, M.R., White, W.T., Simpfendorfer, C.A. (Shark Action Plan) & Rigby, C.L.		
Report Card Remarks	Common and significant refuge in unfished areas and marine parks.		

Summary

The Speckled Maskray is a small continental shelf ray in tropical and subtropical waters of northern Australia and southern Papua New Guinea (PNG). It is common across its Australian range. The species is incidentally caught in trawl fisheries and in PNG, it is considered at moderate risk. In Australia, it is commonly caught incidentally in the Northern Prawn Fishery (NPF) and the East Coast Trawl Fishery (ECTF). It is released as elasmobranch retention is prohibited with post-release mortality unknown but suspected to be high. Ecological risk assessments in the NPF and the ECTF found the risk was low, mainly as only a relatively small proportion of the species' range is fished. In addition to refuge in areas not fished or lightly fished, the species also has considerable refuge within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Therefore, the Speckled Maskray is assessed as globally and in Australia as Least Concern (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021), and Sustainable (SAFS) in Australia.



Distribution

The Speckled Maskray occurs in tropical and subtropical waters of northern Australia and southern Papua New Guinea (Last et al. 2016). In Australia, it is found from Hervey Bay (Queensland) to the Wessel Islands (Northern Territory) (Last and Stevens 2009).

Stock structure and status

There is currently no information on population size, structure, or trend for the species, although it is considered common across its range (Kyne et al. 2021). The relatively recent taxonomic split of this species from the Painted Maskray (*N. leylandi*) has confounded species-specific population trends (Pierce et al. 2015).

Fisheries

The Speckled Maskray is incidentally caught in trawl fisheries. In Papua New Guinea, it is considered at medium risk from the Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery where it may be consumed if retained (Papua New Guinea) (White et al. 2017, Baje et al. 2021). In Australia, it is mainly caught in the Commonwealth Northern Prawn Fishery (NPF) where it is very common and together with the Painted Maskray, accounts for 4.5% of the elasmobranch catch (Stobutzki et al. 2002). In the Queensland East Coast Trawl Fishery (ECTF) scallop sector it is relatively common and was one of the dominant bycatch species accounting for 15% by number of the elasmobranchs (Courtney et al. 2007). It is also likely caught in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery (Pierce et al. 2015). It is released as elasmobranch retention is now prohibited, with post-release mortality unknown but estimated as high in the NPF and in the ECTF, and capture-induced parturition has been reported for other *Neotrygon* species and dasyatids (Pierce et al. 2015, Adams et al. 2018). 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). The Speckled Maskray was considered at low risk of overfishing in the NPF (Zhou and Griffiths 2008) and in the ECTF in ecological risk assessments based on proportion of its range fished and fishing mortality (Campbell et al. 2018). Only a relatively small proportion of the species' range was fished in the NPF and also in the ECTF where trawls occurred across approximately 17% of the Speckled Maskray's range south of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Campbell et al. 2018). The species has significant refuge in areas lightly fished or unfished (Kyne et al. 2021) and also has refuge within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Habitat and biology

The Speckled Maskray is demersal on the continental slope at depths of 0–100 m, though usually in depths of less than 25 m (Last et al. 2016). Maximum size is 32 cm disc width (TL) and maximum age estimated to 18 years (Jacobsen and Bennett 2010, Last et al. 2016). Males and females mature at 3–4 years and at 17 cm DW (Jacobsen and Bennett 2010). Litter size is 1–3 pups (Jacobsen and Bennett 2010).

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: 18 years Max size: 32 cm DW
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Both sexes: 3–4 years, 17 cm DW

CAAB Code: 37 035029

Link to IUCN Page: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/195464/68636975>

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

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