

Hortle's Whipray, *Pateobatis hortlei*

Report Card assessment	Undefined Stock		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Data Deficient	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Near Threatened
Global Assessors	Rigby, C.L. & Derrick, D.		
Australian Assessors	Kyne, P.M., Heupel, M.R., White, W.T., Simpfendorfer, C.A. (Shark Action Plan) & Rigby, C.L.		
Report Card Remarks	Poorly-known; information needed on range, catch levels, biology, and post-release mortality.		

Summary

Hortle's Whipray is a medium-sized, poorly-known demersal ray that occurs in northern Australia and New Guinea. In Australia, it is only known from a limited number of specimens from three restricted and separate areas. It occurs in brackish waters of macrotidal rivers, and estuarine and marine waters near river mouths and may occur more widely in northern Australian rivers, estuaries and marine waters. The species is caught incidentally in trawl and trap fisheries in Papua New Guinea (PNG), is possibly retained for its meat, and was assessed as at medium risk from the PNG trawl fishery. In Australia, it may be taken in the Northern Prawn Fishery (NPF) which operates in its known range. Mandated bycatch reduction Devices (BRDs) are effective at excluding large rays, such as this species, though smaller individuals may still be retained in the nets. If caught, it would be released as retention of elasmobranchs is prohibited, though post-release mortality is unknown. The species may also be taken in Indigenous fisheries and there is no commercial fishing in the rivers from which it has been recorded. Little is known of its biology and resilience to fisheries and the level of interaction with fisheries is unable to be determined. It is assessed globally as Near Threatened (IUCN). In Australia, it is not possible to determine if fishing is causing a population reduction and as there is currently inadequate information available to assess the status, Hortle's Whipray is assessed as Data Deficient (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021) and Undefined Stock (SAFS).



Distribution

Hortle's Whipray occurs in tropical waters of northern Australia and New Guinea (Last et al. 2016, White et al. 2018, Kyne et al. 2021). In Australia, it has a restricted and disjunct known range, mapped as occurring in Torres Strait and recorded from three rivers in northwest Australia, the Daly (NT) River (Northern Territory) and the Pentecost and Durack Rivers (Western Australia) (Last et al. 2016, Kyne et al. 2021). It may occur more widely in northern Australian estuaries and rivers (Kyne et al. 2021).

Stock structure and status

In Australia, Hortle's Whipray is known only from a limited number of specimens and there is currently no information on population size, structure, or trend. It is noted as common in southern Papua New Guinea (White et al. 2018)

Fisheries

Hortle's Whipray is caught incidentally in trawl and trap fisheries and possibly in inshore gillnet and line fisheries. In Papua New Guinea, it has been reported as captured in trap fisheries in Wewak, coastal fisheries, and in the Gulf of Papua Prawn Trawl Fishery (GoPTF), and may be retained for its meat; it was assessed as at medium risk from the GoPTF (White et al. 2018, Baje et al. 2021). In Australia, it may be caught in the Commonwealth Northern Prawn Fishery (NPF) which operates in its known range. If caught it would be released as elasmobranch retention is prohibited in the NPF and the mandatory use of bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) since 2001 has dramatically reduced the capture of large rays (>100 cm TL) by 94%, though BRDs are less effective at excluding smaller rays (Brewer et al. 2006). Indigenous fishing may take this species, though effort is limited across its known Australian range, and there is no commercial fishing in the rivers from which it has been recorded (Kyne et al. 2021).

Habitat and biology

Hortle's Whipray is demersal on the inner continental shelf at depths of 0–10 m and mainly occurs in macrotidal rivers, estuaries, and near river mouths, that is, in brackish to marine waters (Last et al. 2016, Weigmann 2016, Kyne et al. 2021). Maximum size is 112 cm disc width, exceeding 240 cm total length, females mature at approximately 100 cm DW, and one pregnant female had a single pup (White et al. 2018). Little else is known of its biology.

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: 112 cm DW
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: unknown Females: ~100 cm DW

CAAB Code: 37 035033

Link to IUCN Page: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/161598/124512513>

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

References

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