

False Peacock Skate, *Pavoraja pseudonitida*

Report Card assessment	Sustainable		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Least Concern (Endemic to Australia)	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Least Concern
Global Assessors	Rigby, 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 low and significant refuge across its range.		

Summary

The False Peacock Skate is a small deepwater ray endemic to tropical northeast Australia where it occurs in a relatively restricted range. It is one of the most abundant upper slope rays in its range. The species is incidentally caught in trawl and possibly line fisheries. It may be caught in the Line Sector of the Coral Sea Fishery, though its range overlaps only marginally with the CSF in



which the Line Sector has low effort and trawling is no longer permitted. If caught, the species would likely be released and the CSF has chondrichthyan handling practices to maximise post-release survival. It also receives significant refuge in the Coral Sea Marine Park. It may interact infrequently with Queensland managed fisheries, though it has not been reported from those fisheries that mostly operate further south than the southern limit of its range. Fishing effort is very low across its range where there is also significant spatial refuge. Therefore, the False Peacock Skate is assessed as Least Concern (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021) and Sustainable (SAFS).

Distribution

The False Peacock Skate is endemic to tropical waters off northeast Australia (Last et al. 2016). It has a relatively restricted range on the outer Great Barrier Reef from north of Townsville to south of Saumarez Reef off Rockhampton (Queensland) (Last et al. 2008, Last and Stevens 2009).

Stock structure and status

There is currently no information on population size, structure, or trend for the species. However, it is one of the most abundant upper slope rays in its range (Last and Stevens 2009).

Fisheries

The False Peacock Skate is incidentally caught in trawl and possibly line fisheries. It may be caught in the Line Sector of the Commonwealth Coral Sea Fishery (CSF), although the CSF overlaps only marginally with the species range and the Line sector has low effort with only 1–2 vessels active in

recent years and trawling, which had historically low effort and had caught this species, is no longer permitted (Rigby 2015, Patterson et al. 2022). The species is likely released if caught as it has no commercial value and though post-release mortality is unknown, the CSF has implemented chondrichthyan handling practices to maximise post-release survival (AFMA 2010). It has also received significant protection since 2014 with the implementation of the Coral Sea Marine Park, which includes zoning and gear restrictions (Patterson et al. 2022, Parks Australia 2023). The species may interact with Queensland managed fisheries yet this is unlikely to be frequent. The deepwater eastern king prawn sector of the East Coast Trawl Fishery has not recorded this species and the Deepwater Fin Fish Fishery uses benthopelagic rather than demersal gear and has very limited effort. Additionally, both fisheries mostly operate further south than the southern limit of the False Peacock Skate’s range (DEEDI 2010, Pears et al. 2012, Rigby et al. 2016, DAF 2019).

Habitat and biology

The False Peacock Skate is demersal on the upper continental slope at depths of 210–510 m (Last et al. 2016). Maximum size is at least 37 cm total length (TL) and males mature at 32 cm TL (Last et al. 2016). Little else is known of its biology.

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: at least 37 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: 32 cm TL Females: unknown

CAAB Code: 37 031025

Link to IUCN Page: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/195473/68640697>

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

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