

## Challenger Skate, *Rajella challengeri*

Report Card assessment	Negligible		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Least Concern (Endemic to Australia)	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Least Concern
Global Assessors	Sherman, C.S.		
Australian Assessors	Kyne, P.M., Heupel, M.R., White, W.T., Simpfendorfer, C.A. (Shark Action Plan) & Rigby, C.L.		
Report Card Remarks	Occurs deeper than current fisheries operations.		

### Summary

The Challenger Skate is a small deepwater species endemic to temperate waters of southern Australia. It may have previously been an incidental catch of the Commonwealth Southern and Eastern Scalefish Fishery (SESSF) and the South Tasman Rise Trawl Fishery (STRTF). However, the SESSF has prohibited fishing deeper than 700 m since 2007 and STRTF was closed in 2007. Consequently, this species now occurs

beyond the depth of current fishing operations. It was assessed as at low risk from both fishing and climate change. Therefore, the Challenger Skate is assessed as Least Concern (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021) and Negligible (SAFS) in Australia.



### Distribution

The Challenger Skate is endemic to temperate waters of southern Australia where it occurs in a wide range from Shoalhaven Heads (New South Wales) to the central Great Australian Bight (South Australia) (Last and Stevens 2009, Last et al. 2016).

### Stock structure and status

There is currently no information on population size, structure, or trend for the species. However, it is considered abundant at depths greater than 1,100 m off Tasmania (Last and Stevens 2009).

### Fisheries

The Challenger Skate may have been incidentally taken in the Commonwealth Southern and Eastern Scalefish Fishery (SESSF), though it was not noted in an analysis of catch from 2000–2006 (Walker and Gason 2007). Since 2007, fishing deeper than 700 m has been prohibited in most SESSF waters and as such the species occurs beyond the depth of current fishing operations. The species vulnerability to fishing and climate change was assessed as low (Walker et al. 2021). It may have been previously

caught in the South Tasman Rise Trawl Fishery (STRTF). That fishery operated at average depths of 900–1,000 m from 1997–2007 using demersal trawls (Clark and O’Driscoll 2002). The fishery was closed within the Australian Fishing Zone in 2007 to protect the depleted target stocks of Orange Roughy (*Hoplostethus atlanticus*) (Emery 2020, Patterson et al. 2022).

### Habitat and biology

The Challenger Skate is demersal on the continental slope at depths of 860–1,500 m (Last et al. 2016). Maximum size is approximately 56 cm total length (TL) with males mature at approximately 50–52 cm TL (Last and Stehmann 2008). Little else is known of its biology.

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: ~56 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: ~50–52 cm TL Females: unknown

**CAAB Code:** 37 031040

**Link to IUCN Page:** <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/70688333/70688363>

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

### References

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