

Australian Cownose Ray, *Rhinoptera neglecta*

Report Card assessment	Sustainable		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Least Concern	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Data Deficient
Global Assessors	Jacobsen, I.P. & Stevens, J.D.		
Australian Assessors	Kyne, P.M., Heupel, M.R., White, W.T., Simpfendorfer, C.A. (Shark Action Plan) & Rigby, C.L.		
Report Card Remarks	Australian fishing pressure low and significant refuge across its range.		

Summary

The Australian Cownose Ray is a medium-sized benthopelagic ray that occurs in tropical and subtropical northern Australia and in Papua New Guinea. It is caught incidentally in gillnets and to a lesser degree in trawl fisheries and may be retained for its meat in Papua New Guinea. In Australia, if caught it would be released as elasmobranch retention is prohibited in most fisheries with which it may interact; post-release mortality is unknown. It is relatively abundant and can form large aggregations with the species' benthopelagic nature likely limiting its level of interaction with most fisheries. It is a minor component of the net fisheries except for the beach protection programs where it is one of the main ray species incidentally caught; it is released with a 57% survival rate reported in Queensland. It is a very minor component in the Queensland East Coast Trawl fishery and Commonwealth Eastern Tuna and Billfish Longline fishery where it is considered at low risk. Many parts of the species' range across northern Australia have low fishing effort and it would receive significant refuge in the extensive network of marine parks. Therefore, the Australian Cownose Ray is assessed as Least Concern (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021) and Sustainable (SAFS).



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Distribution

The Australian Cownose Ray occurs in tropical and subtropical waters of eastern and northern Australia and in Papua New Guinea (Last et al. 2016, White et al. 2017). In Australia, it ranges from Newcastle (New South Wales) to the northern Kimberley (Western Australia) (Last and Stevens 2009, Last et al. 2016, Bray and Gomon 2021).

Stock structure and status

There is currently no information on population size, structure or trend for the species. However, it is relatively abundant on the east coast of Australia (Tobin et al. 2014, Tagliafico et al. 2020).

Fisheries

The Australian Cownose Ray is caught incidentally in gillnet, trap, line, and to a lesser degree in trawl fisheries. It is caught in the Gulf of Papua Prawn Trawl Fishery, Papua New Guinea where it may be retained for its meat and was assessed as at low risk from the fishery (White et al. 2017, Baje et al. 2021). In Australia, it is a minor component of the gillnet sector of Queensland East Coast Inshore Fishery (Harry et al. 2011) and may be taken in other state and territory net fisheries. It is one of the main ray species incidentally caught in Queensland (Qld) and New South Wales (NSW) beach protection programs. In the Qld Shark Control Program nets, 137 individuals were caught from 1992–2008 in southern Qld, with a survival rate of 57% and in the NSW Shark Meshing Program, the species accounted for 8.8% of the total catch in 2020/21 (Sumpton et al. 2011, DPI 2021). It is not reported from the Commonwealth Northern Prawn Fishery and is a very minor component of the Queensland East Coast Trawl Fishery (Stobutzki et al. 2000). It is a minor incidental catch in the Commonwealth Eastern Tuna and Billfish Longline fishery and is at low risk from the fishery (Sporcic et al. 2019). If it is caught in Australian fisheries, it would be released as elasmobranch retention is prohibited in most of the fisheries with which it interacts, although post-release mortality is unknown. Across northern Australia, many parts of the species' range have low fishing effort and the species would receive refuge in the extensive network of marine parks across its Australian range.

Habitat and biology

The Australian Cownose Ray is benthopelagic on the continental shelf at depths of 0–50 m (Last et al. 2016, Weigmann 2016). Maximum size is 140 cm disc width (DW) and males mature at approximately 115 cm DW (White et al. 2017). Little else is known of its biology. The species forms large aggregations that can range up to more than 400 individuals (observed on Australian east coast) (Tagliafico et al. 2020).

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: 140 cm DW
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: ~115 cm DW Females: unknown

CAAB Code: 37 040001

Link to IUCN Page: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/161530/68642171>

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

References

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