

Kapala Stingaree, *Urolophus kapalensis*

Report Card assessment	Sustainable		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Near Threatened (Endemic to Australia)	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Near Threatened
Global Assessors	Kyne, P.M. & Bennett, M.B.		
Australian Assessors	Kyne, P.M., Heupel, M.R., White, W.T., Simpfendorfer, C.A. (Shark Action Plan) & Rigby, C.L.		
Report Card Remarks	Abundant but low productivity, low post-release survival, significant catches though some declines in effort from historic levels.		

Summary

The Kapala Stingaree is a small and abundant species endemic to subtropical and temperate continental shelf waters of Australia's east coast. It is an incidental catch of trawl fisheries and is infrequently caught in the Commonwealth Southern and Eastern Scalefish Fishery (SESSF) and while historically there was a dramatic decline in deeper stingarees caught in that fishery, fishing pressure has declined significantly and it is now assessed as at low risk in the SESSF. It is one of the dominant bycatch species in the Queensland East Coast Trawl Fishery (ECTF) and is also assessed as at low risk from the ECTF though fishing mortality is uncertain. It was previously frequently caught in the New South Wales Ocean Trawl Fishery, yet in recent years observed catches were very low, though there has also been a marked effort decline of 80% since the early 1990s. The species is released when caught although though post-release mortality for trawl caught stingarees is generally high and stingarees typically abort their embryos when captured. It may receive some refuge in state and Commonwealth marine parks. Given its overlap with fisheries and level of capture, low productivity and post-release survival, it is suspected that the population has undergone a reduction approaching 30% over the last three generation lengths (30 years), and thus, it is assessed as Near Threatened (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021) and Sustainable (SAFS).



Distribution

The Kapala Stingaree is endemic to subtropical to temperate waters in eastern Australia (Last et al. 2016). It occurs in a relatively restricted range from Cape Moreton (Queensland) to Green Cape (New South Wales) (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 most abundant off coastal New South Wales (Last et al. 2016).

Fisheries

The Kapala Stingaree is an incidental catch of trawl fisheries. It is a minimal catch in the Commonwealth Southern and Eastern Scalefish Fishery (SESSF) with an estimated annual catch of 1.2 tonne between 2000–2006 (Walker and Gason 2007). There was a decline of 66% in mean catch rates of stingarees in the SESSF over 20 years from 1977–1997, and though the surveys that documented this decline were deeper than the depth range of this species, it indicates the declines that can occur when stingarees are heavily fished (Graham et al. 2001, Kyne et al. 2021). Fishing pressure has declined significantly in the SESSF and the Common Stingaree is now assessed as at low risk from the fishery (Sporcic et al. 2021). The species is one of the dominant bycatch species in the shallow water eastern king prawn sector of the Queensland East Coast Trawl Fishery (ECTF) and although bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) have been mandatory since 2002, their effectiveness is limited at excluding small rays such as this species (Courtney et al. 2007). The species was assessed as at low risk from the ECTF but when uncertainty around fishing mortality was included it moved to precautionary medium risk (Campbell et al. 2018). In New South Wales, it was frequently caught in the Ocean Trawl Fishery (OTF) in the early 2000s, although recent observed catches noted the species in <1% of observed shots over two years (2017/18–2018/19) (Johnson and Barnes 2023). Since the early 1990s, effort in the OTF has declined markedly by 80% (Johnson and Barnes 2023). The species is released when caught, though, post-release mortality for trawl caught stingarees is generally high and urolophids typically abort their embryos when caught which can reduce population viability (Rigby et al. 2016, Adams et al. 2018, Campbell et al. 2018). The state and Commonwealth Marine Parks networks may provide some refuge for the species (Parks Australia 2023). The species vulnerability to fishing and climate change in southern waters was assessed as low (Walker et al. 2021).

Habitat and biology

The Kapala Stingaree is demersal on the continental shelf at depths of 10–130 m (Last et al. 2016). Maximum size is 52 cm total length (TL), males mature at 31–46 cm TL and females at 40 cm TL (Last et al. 2016). Litter size is one pup (Kyne et al. 2016). Little else is known of its biology.

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: 52 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: 31–46 cm TL Females: 40 cm TL

CAAB Code: 37 038018

Link to IUCN Page: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/42730/68649607>

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

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