

Coral Sea Stingaree, *Urolophus piperatus*

Report Card assessment	Sustainable		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Least Concern (Endemic to Australia)	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Least Concern
Global Assessors	Kyne, P.M., Last, P.R. & Marshall, L.J.		
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 across its range and Coral Sea Marine Park provides significant spatial protection.		

Summary

The Coral Sea Stingaree is a small deepwater species endemic to tropical and subtropical northeast Australia where it occurs in a relatively restricted range. The species is incidentally caught in trawl and possibly line fisheries. It is caught in the Queensland deepwater eastern king prawn sector of the East Coast Trawl Fishery (ECTF) that operates to 300 m and thus there is some depth refuge. It is possibly caught in a deepwater development trawl fishery that operates at 250–800 m and though it is limited effort and interactions are suspected to be minimal, information to verify this is not yet available. Both fisheries only operate in the southern part of the species' range. If captured, the species would be released as elasmobranch retention is prohibited in Queensland. However, post-release mortality is suspected to be high and the species aborts its embryos on capture which can reduce population viability. It may be caught in the Line Sector of the Coral Sea Fishery (CSF), though effort is low and trawling is no longer permitted. The species has significant spatial refuge in the Coral Sea Marine Park. Therefore, the Argus Skate is assessed as Least Concern (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021) and Sustainable (SAFS).



Distribution

The Coral Sea Stingaree is endemic to tropical and subtropical northeast Australia (Last et al. 2016). It has a relatively restricted known range in Queensland where it occurs from Cairns to Moreton Island (Last and Stevens 2009).

Stock structure and status

There is currently no information on population size, structure, or trend for the species.

Fisheries

The Coral Sea Stingaree is incidentally caught in trawl and possibly line fisheries. It is caught in the Queensland deepwater eastern king prawn sector of the East Coast Trawl Fishery (ECTF) and released as elasmobranch retention is prohibited (Rigby et al. 2016). Although bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) have been mandatory since 2002, their effectiveness is limited at excluding small rays such as this species (Griffiths et al. 2006). Post-release mortality for trawl caught stingarees is generally high (Campbell et al. 2018) and this species was observed to abort its embryos, like other urolophids, when caught which can reduce population viability (Rigby et al. 2016, Adams et al. 2018). The deepwater ECTF only operates in the southern part of the species' range and to a maximum depth of 300 m (Rigby et al. 2016). It may be captured in a deepwater developmental trawl fishery in southern Queensland that operates at 250–800 m and while *Urolophus* species are considered at negligible risk because of low likelihood of interactions due to short trawl shot times and limited effort, catch data is needed to verify this risk level (DEE 2019). The species is unlikely to be taken in the Queensland Deepwater Fin Fish Fishery which uses benthopelagic rather than demersal gear and has limited effort (DEEDI 2010, DAF 2019). It may be caught in the Line Sector of the Commonwealth Coral Sea Fishery (CSF), although the sector has low effort with only 1–2 vessels active in recent years and trawling, which had historically low effort, is no longer permitted (Patterson et al. 2022). The species is likely released if caught as it has no commercial value and the CSF has implemented chondrichthyan handling practices to maximise post-release survival (AFMA 2010). The species has also received significant spatial refuge since 2014 with the implementation of the Coral Sea Marine Park, which includes zoning and gear restrictions (Patterson et al. 2022, Parks Australia 2023).

Habitat and biology

The Coral Sea Stingaree is demersal on the continental shelf and upper slope at depths of 123–370 m (Last et al. 2016, Rigby et al. 2016). Maximum size is 48 cm total length (TL) and males mature at approximately 23 cm TL and females at less than 27 cm TL (Last and Stevens 2009, Rigby et al. 2016). Litter size could be 3 pups with little else known of its biology (Rigby et al. 2016).

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: 48 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: 23 cm TL Females: < 27 cm TL

CAAB Code: 37 038019

Link to IUCN Page: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/60103/68650051>

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

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