

Gulf Wobbegong, *Orectolobus halei*

Report Card assessment	Sustainable		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Endemic to Australia	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Least Concern
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Report Card Remarks	Catch is managed in NSW and low in other states		

Summary

The Gulf Wobbegong is endemic to southern Australia. It is a site attached species that occurs at the surface to 195 m depth. It is caught in commercial and recreational fisheries as a target species and as bycatch. In New South Wales (NSW), wobbegong catch declined by more than 50% between 1997-1998 and 2007-2008, after which it stabilised. This led to all three species of



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wobbegong occurring in NSW, including the Gulf Wobbegong, to be listed as Vulnerable in that state. New NSW management regulations in May 2008 introduced a daily limit of six wobbegongs. As a result, wobbegongs are no longer targeted to the same extent as they used to be in NSW. In other Australian states, wobbegongs are not targeted and catches are low. There is no evidence to infer or suspect population decline of the Gulf Wobbegong. Therefore, the species is assessed as Least Concern (IUCN) and Sustainable (SAFS).

Distribution

The Gulf Wobbegong is endemic to Australia. It is found from Norwegian Bay (Western Australia) south through South Australia, Victoria, NSW, and to Hervey Bay (Queensland) (Last and Stevens 2009).

Stock structure and status

There is currently no information on population size, structure, or trend for the species, but based on catch data from various Australian fisheries there is no reason to believe the population is declining.

Fisheries

The Gulf Wobbegong may be caught in trawls, beach seines, gillnets, lobster pots and traps, by hook-and-line, and also by spearfishing. Observed site fidelity in wobbegongs is likely to increase their susceptibility to fishing pressure. Post-release survival is thought to be high.

In NSW, three wobbegong species (Spotted Wobbegong, Ornate Wobbegong, and Gulf Wobbegong) are taken in the Ocean Trap and Line Fishery (OTL), in the fish and prawn sectors of the Ocean Trawl Fishery, and in the Estuary General Fishery. The majority of commercial wobbegong catches occur in the OTL Fishery. The NSW total catch of wobbegongs declined from about 120 tonnes in 1990-1991 to about seven tonnes in 2008-2009, largely as a result of reductions in effort. Catches have now stabilized at approximately 20 tonnes per year. Based on species-specific reporting from July 2009, catches of the Gulf Wobbegong ranged from 8.9 to 12.3 tonnes per year, showing no declines. There is also a daily trip limit on wobbegongs and minimum size limit of 180 cm.

In Queensland, Wobbegongs are not targeted but have been recorded in low numbers as bycatch of prawn trawl fisheries (Kyne et al. 2002). Small wobbegongs are sometimes caught by crab pots in Southeast Queensland and Moreton Bay, but are usually discarded (J. Stead, pers. comm., 2007). In South Australia, commercial catches of wobbegong are small ranging from 0.5 to 4 tonnes (A. Tsolos, pers. comm., March 2015). In Western Australian, the Gulf Wobbegong is a small component of the bycatch of the temperate demersal gillnet and demersal longline fisheries. These fisheries catch on average 40 tonnes of wobbegong species per year, and the catch does not show any sign of decline (Department of Fisheries WA Fishery Status Report 1998-99 to 2013-14, Braccini et al. 2014). The Gulf Wobbegong is believed to be a major component of this aggregated catch. However, as all sharks and rays are now commercially protected throughout Western Australia, wobbegongs cannot generally be retained by State-managed commercial fishing vessels unless they are operating in the managed shark fishery.

Habitat and biology

The Gulf Wobbegong occurs inshore on the continental shelf to at least 195 m depth (J. Chidlow, pers. comm., 2011). It is found in bays, on macroalgal rocky reef areas, coral reefs, and around offshore islands (Compagno 2001). A survey of wobbegongs showed evidence of site attachment with divers observing individual sharks in exactly the same positions over consecutive dives (Ecology Lab 1991). Maximum size is at least 206 cm total length (TL), with reports to 290 cm TL individuals requiring confirmation (Last and Stevens 2009).

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: at least 206 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: 168 cm TL Females: 161 cm TL

Link to IUCN Page: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/161709/0>

Link to page at Shark References: <http://shark-references.com/species/view/Orectolobus-halei>

References

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