

Eyebrow Wedgefish, *Rhynchobatus palpebratus*

Report Card assessment	Sustainable		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Refer to Global Assessment	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Near Threatened
Assessors	Rigby, C.L.		
Report Card Remarks	Management in Australian waters has reduced fishing mortality		

Summary

The Eyebrow Wedgefish is a medium sized wedgefish from inshore waters of tropical Australia. There are some records from Papua New Guinea and Thailand. It is captured in inshore net and trawl fisheries, although fishing mortality is estimated to be low in Australian waters. The fins are highly valuable and while there are finning bans in all Australian waters, illegal fishing in northern Australia waters



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may pose some risk. Improved management measures in Australia over the last decade will have reduced fishing mortality in Australian waters. Therefore, the species is assessed as globally and in Australia as Near Threatened (IUCN) and in Australia, Sustainable (SAFS).

Distribution

In Australia, the Eyebrow Wedgefish occurs on the continental shelf of tropical western and northern Australia from Exmouth Gulf (Western Australia) to Gladstone (Queensland) (Last and Stevens 2009). It has also been reported from the Gulf of Papua, Papua New Guinea (PNG) (L. Baje, PNG National Fisheries Authority, pers. comm. 2015) with a single record from the Andaman Sea, Thailand (Compagno and Last 2008, Last and Stevens 2009).

Stock structure and status

Recent taxonomic revision of the genus makes it difficult to discern population trends. There are no data from Australia on the status of the population or its structure.

Fisheries

The Eyebrow Wedgefish are often retained for their high value fins. Finning regulations introduced over the past decade have been unlikely to reduce international demand. The Eyebrow Wedgefish is taken as bycatch in trawl and net fisheries across northern Australia. The compulsory use of turtle exclusion devices in Australian trawl fishery nets has reduced the bycatch of larger sharks and rays (>1

m) (Brewer et al. 2006). There is a ban on retention of shark products in the Northern Prawn Fishery (Bensley et al. 2009). The fishing threats to the Eyebrow Wedgefish within Australian waters are managed and likely to be minor. In northern Australia, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) was a large and prevalent threat during the early 2000s and would likely have captured the species (Field et al. 2009). However, the IUU fishing has declined significantly since 2006 due to increased border surveillance, international agreements and possibly increased fuel prices (Field et al. 2009, Haward and Bergin 2016). This would likely have resulted in reduced IUU catches of the Eyebrow Wedgefish.

Habitat and biology

The Eyebrow Wedgefish is mainly coastal in depths of 5 to 60 m in Australia and 40 to 60 m in Thailand. It is reported to reach at least 262 cm total length (TL) with males mature at 103 cm TL (Compagno and Last 2008, Last and Stevens 2009, P. Last pers., comm., CSIRO, 2015). Maximum age of the Eyebrow Wedgefish is unknown and age at maturity is estimated at 3-5 years for males (White et al. 2014).

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: at least 262 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: estimated 3-5 years, 103 cm TL Females: unknown

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

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

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