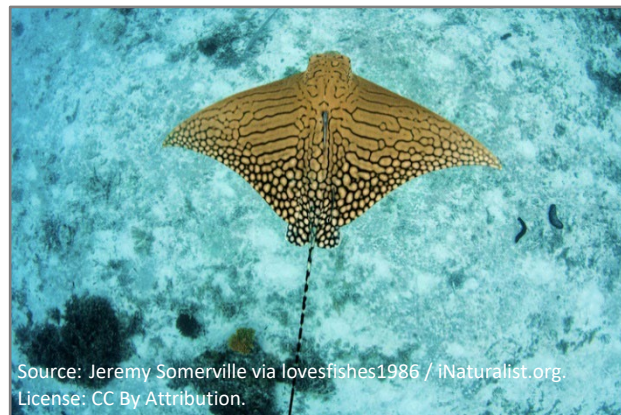


## Ornate Eagle Ray, *Aetomylaeus vespertilio*

Report Card assessment	Sustainable		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Near Threatened	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Endangered
Global Assessors	White, W.T. & Kyne, P.M.		
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 managed, BRDs significantly reducing catch; yet regionally connected and significant global population reductions.		

### Summary

The Ornate Eagle Ray is a large demersal and semi-pelagic ray that occurs in tropical and subtropical northern Australia and patchily across the Indo-Pacific. It is caught incidentally across its range by trawl and net fisheries and is retained for its meat, in at least Indonesia, and likely across the Indo-Pacific. It is released in Australia where it is now prohibited from retention in nearly all fisheries it may encounter, although post-release mortality is unknown. It is a rarely seen and possibly naturally uncommon species and is mainly caught in the Northern Prawn Fishery where it is considered



at low risk of being unsustainably fished. It may also be taken in other state and Territory fisheries, though all mandate the use of bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) which have been shown to reduce the catch of this species by >90%. Outside of Australia, it is subject to intense and unregulated fisheries and with likely low biological productivity, its population is suspected to have significantly reduced and globally, it is assessed as Endangered (IUCN). In Australia, although fishing pressure is managed and BRDs enable escape from most fisheries interactions, the species is semi-pelagic and individuals in Australia are likely connected regionally to the global population and thus, it is suspected the population has undergone some reduction and the Ornate Eagle Ray is assessed as Near Threatened (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021) and Sustainable (SAFS).

### Distribution

The Ornate Eagle Ray occurs in tropical and subtropical waters off northern Australia and patchily in the Indo-West Pacific from southern China to the Red Sea and South Africa (Last et al. 2016, Jabado et al. 2022). In Australia, it ranges from Shoalwater Bay (Queensland) to Shark Bay (Western Australia) (Last et al. 2016)

### Stock structure and status

There is currently no information on population size, structure, or trend for the species. The species is rarely seen and may be naturally uncommon (White and Kyne 2016). Given the semi-pelagic habitat of the species, it is inferred that the population in Australia is regionally connected with at least Southeast Asia, though this requires verification (Kyne et al. 2021).

### Fisheries

The Ornate Eagle Ray is caught incidentally by trawl and net fisheries and known to be retained for its meat and cartilage, at least in Indonesia, and probably more widely across its range (White et al. 2006, White and Kyne 2016). In Australia, it is mainly caught in the Commonwealth Northern Prawn Fishery (NPF) and possibly in the Queensland East Coast Trawl Fishery (ECTF), Inshore Fishery (East Coast and Gulf of Carpentaria (GoC)), and Developmental Fishery, the Northern Territory Demersal Fishery (DF), and Western Australian prawn fisheries and Pilbara Fish Trawl Fishery. Bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) are mandated in most of these fisheries since the early-mid 2000s and have been shown to reduce the catch of Ornate Eagle Ray by >90%, though they may not be as effective at excluding juveniles (Brewer et al. 2004, Griffiths et al. 2006). If it is caught, it would be released as elasmobranch retention is now prohibited, except in the GoC Inshore Fishery, although post-release mortality is unknown (Jacobsen et al. 2019). The Ornate Eagle Ray was considered at low risk of being unsustainably fished in the NPF (Zhou and Griffiths 2008) and likely also in the ECTF, where a sympatric eagle ray species was assessed as at low risk (Campbell et al. 2018). Outside of Australia, the species is subject to intense and unregulated fishing pressure across its range (White and Kyne 2016).

### Habitat and biology

The Ornate Eagle Ray is demersal and semi-pelagic on the continental shelf over coral reefs and muddy bays at depths of 0–110 m (Last et al. 2016). Maximum size is at least 300 cm disc width (DW) (Last et al. 2016). Males mature at approximately 170 cm DW (Last et al. 2016). Little else is known of its biology but based on other eagle rays, it is suspected to have low biological productivity (White and Kyne 2016).

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: at least 300 cm DW
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: approximately 170 cm DW Females: unknown

**CAAB Code:** 37 039005

**Link to IUCN Page:** <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/60121/68607665>

**Link to page at Shark References:** <https://shark-references.com/species/view/Aetomylaeus-vespertilio>

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