

Epaulette Shark, *Hemiscyllium ocellatum*

Report Card assessment	Sustainable		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Least Concern	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Least Concern
Assessors	Bennett, M., Kyne, P. & Heupel, M.		
Australian Assessors	Kyne, P.M., Heupel, M.R., White, W.T. & Simpfendorfer, C.A. (Shark Action Plan)		
Report Card Remarks	Small coral reef species with no major threats in Australia.		

Summary

The Epaulette Shark is a relatively small species found across northern Australia and around New Guinea. Its primary habitat is shallow, inshore waters and coral reefs. Marine parks protect much of its critical habitat on the Australian east coast. There are no important fishing pressures in Australia, although a small aquarium trade does target the species. As there are no major threats to the species, it is assessed as Least Concern (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021) and Sustainable (SAFS) in Australia.



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Distribution

The Epaulette Shark is commonly found in the shallow coastal waters from Sydney (New South Wales) through Queensland, the Northern Territory, and into northern Western Australia (Allen and Erdman 2008, Allen et al. 2013). It also occurs around New Guinea (Indonesia and Papua New Guinea) (Last and Stevens 2009).

Stock structure and status

In Australia, the Capricorn-Bunker group, Great Barrier Reef, has a large population of Epaulette Sharks. Population estimates in small parts of its range suggest that individuals reefs in the southern GBR may support thousands of individuals (Heupel and Bennett 2007) suggesting a large and robust population. The degree of interchange of individuals among reefs is unknown and subpopulations may exist if emigration/immigration is minimal. Population sizes and ranges in Western Australia and the Northern Territory are unknown. The lack of major threats to the species allows the assumption that the population is stable.

Fisheries

The Epaulette Shark is taken in small numbers for the aquarium trade, and as bycatch from fishing activities. However, these activities place minimal pressure on this common species. Therefore, there are currently no major threats in Australia.

Habitat and biology

The Epaulette Shark commonly occurs in shallow coral reefs to depths of at least 40 m. It is a small, slender shark with a maximum size of 107 cm total length (TL) (Last and Stevens 2009), but at Heron Island Reef, Queensland, individuals did not exceed 76 cm TL. The species is tolerant of low oxygen conditions. This trait may enable the species to survive in areas with poor water quality.

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: 107 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: 54 cm TL Females: 62 cm TL

CAAB Code: 37 013014

Link to IUCN Page: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/41818/68625284>

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

References

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- Heupel, M.R. and Bennett, M.B. 2007. Estimating the abundance of reef-dwelling sharks: a case study of the epaulette shark, *Hemiscyllium ocellatum* (Elasmobranchii: Hemiscylliidae). *Pacific Science* 61: 383–394.
- Kyne, P.M., Heupel, M.R., White, W.T. and Simpfendorfer, C.A. 2021. *The Action Plan for Australian Sharks and Rays 2021*. National Environmental Science Program, Marine Biodiversity Hub, Hobart
- Last, P.R. and Stevens, J.D. 2009. *Sharks and Rays of Australia*. CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood.