

Australian Whipray, *Himantura australis*

Report Card assessment	Sustainable		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Least Concern	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Least Concern
Global Assessors	Rigby, C.L. & Derrick, D.		
Australian Assessors	Kyne, P.M., Heupel, M.R., White, W.T., Simpfendorfer, C.A. (Shark Action Plan) & Rigby, C.L.		
Report Card Remarks	Australian incidental catches low, BRDs significantly reducing catch, marine parks provide refuge.		

Summary

The Leopard Whipray is a large continental shelf ray distributed across tropical and subtropical waters of northern Australia and southern New Guinea. It is caught incidentally and retained for its meat in Papua New Guinea. In Australia, it is caught incidentally in trawl and gillnet fisheries and likely released as most of these prohibit elasmobranch retention, although post-release mortality is unknown. Additionally, many of the trawl fisheries mandate the use of bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs) which have been shown to reduce the catch of whiprays by >95%. Many parts of the species' range across northern Australia have low fishing effort that is managed and it receives significant refuge in the extensive network of marine parks. The Australian Whipray is assessed globally and in Australia as Least Concern (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021) and Sustainable (SAFS).



Distribution

The Australian Whipray occurs in tropical and subtropical waters of northern Australia and southern New Guinea (Last et al. 2016a). In Australia, it has a wide range from Brisbane (Queensland) to Shark Bay (Western Australia) (Last et al. 2016b).

Stock structure and status

There is currently no information on population size, structure, or trend for the species. However, it is reportedly common in parts of its Australian range (Rigby and Derrick 2021).

Fisheries

The Australian Whipray is taken incidentally in trawl and net fisheries. In Papua New Guinea, it is considered at medium risk from the Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery where it may be consumed if retained (White et al. 2017, Baje et al. 2021). In Australia, it is caught in the Commonwealth Northern Prawn Fishery (NPF) and in the Queensland East Coast Trawl Fishery (ECTF), Gulf of Carpentaria (GoC)

Developmental Fishery and Inshore Fishery (Jacobsen et al. 2019a, b). It is also possibly caught in the Northern Territory Demersal Fishery (DF) and Western Australian prawn fisheries and Pilbara Fish Trawl Fishery. Bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) have been mandated in most of these fisheries since the early-mid 2000s and reduce the catch of the whiprays by >95%, though they may not be as effective at excluding juveniles (Griffiths et al. 2006, Gaughan and Santoro 2021). If it is caught, it would be released as elasmobranch retention is now prohibited, except in the Queensland GoC Inshore Fishery, although post-release mortality is unknown. The Australian Whipray was considered at intermediate-low risk in the ECTF due to its low fecundity (Pears et al. 2012) and at low risk of overfishing in the NPF due to estimated fishing mortality being below levels leading to population reduction (Zhou and Griffiths 2008). Catches in Western Australia fisheries are likely minimal as effort is limited and negligible bycatch has been reported in recent years (Gaughan and Santoro 2021). Across northern Australia, many parts of the species' range have low fishing effort and the species would receive refuge in the extensive network of marine parks (Parks Australia 2023).

Habitat and biology

The Australian Whipray is demersal on the inner continental shelf from inshore to at least 45 m and it enters estuaries and brackish tidal rivers (Last et al. 2016a, b; White et al. 2017, Kyne et al. 2021). Maximum size is 183 cm disc width (DW) with males mature at 112 cm TL (Last et al. 2016b). Litter sizes of 2–4 pups (Last et al. 2016a). Little else is known of its biology.

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: 183 cm DW
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: 112 cm DW Females: unknown

CAAB Code: 37 035003

Link to IUCN Page: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/116855925/116855930>

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

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