

Sawback Skate, *Leucoraja pristispina*

Report Card assessment	Sustainable		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Least Concern (Endemic to Australia)	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Least Concern
Global Assessors	Knuckey, J. & Ebert, D.A.		
Australian Assessors	Kyne, P.M., Heupel, M.R., White, W.T., Simpfendorfer, C.A. (Shark Action Plan) & Rigby, C.L.		
Report Card Remarks	Fishing pressure low and significant spatial refuge across its range.		

Summary

The Sawback Skate is a small endemic deepwater skate with a wide range across tropical to subtropical waters in Western Australia. It is likely caught incidentally in the Commonwealth Northwest Slope Trawl Fishery and Western Deepwater Trawl Fishery and likely released as it is of little commercial value; post-release mortality is unknown. Trawl effort has declined considerably in these fisheries since the 1980s and there is currently limited effort in both fisheries. Chondrichthyans have been assessed as at low risk in these fisheries. The species would also receive refuge in the Commonwealth North-west Marine Parks Network. Overall, fishing effort is very low across its range where there is also significant spatial refuge. Therefore, the Sawback Skate is assessed as Least Concern (IUCN) and Sustainable (SAFS).



The Sawback Skate is endemic to tropical and subtropical waters of Western Australia. It has a broad range occurring from Ashmore Reef to Shoal Point, south of Kalbarri (Last et al. 2008, Last and Stevens 2009, Last et al. 2016).

Distribution

The Sawback Skate is endemic to tropical and subtropical waters of Western Australia. It has a broad range occurring from Ashmore Reef to Shoal Point, south of Kalbarri (Last et al. 2008, Last and Stevens 2009, Last et al. 2016).

Stock structure and status

There is currently no information on population size, structure, or trend for the species.

Fisheries

The Sawback Skate is likely caught incidentally by deepwater trawl fisheries. Its spatial and depth range overlaps with the Commonwealth Northwest Slope Trawl Fishery which targets prawns and scampi (*Metanephrops australiensis*) at 200–600 m depths and with the Western Deepwater Trawl Fishery which targets finfish and bugs (*Ibacus* spp.) at 200–700 m depths (Patterson et al. 2022). As it is of little commercial value, the Sawback Skate is likely released and there is no information on post-

release mortality. Trawl effort has declined considerably in these fisheries since the late 1980s and early 1990s and currently both fisheries have limited effort with only 1–6 active vessels (Patterson et al. 2022). Chondrichthyans have been assessed as at low risk in these fisheries (Zhou et al. 2009). It would also receive refuge in the Commonwealth North-west Marine Parks Network that came into effect in 2018 which include zoning and gear restrictions. This network includes the Ashmore Reef Marine Park, which has been in place since the 1980s and is mostly a Sanctuary Zone where fishing is prohibited (Parks Australia 2023).

Habitat and biology

The Sawback Skate is demersal on the upper continental slope at depths of 200–505 m (Last et al. 2009, Last et al. 2016). Maximum size is at least 40 cm total length (TL) and males mature at approximately 33–35 cm TL (Last et al. 2016). Little else is known of its biology.

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: at least 40 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: ~33–35 cm TL Females: unknown

CAAB Code: 37 031039

Link to IUCN Page: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/195458/68631857>

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

References

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