

Blue Skate, *Notoraja azurea*

Report Card assessment	Negligible		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Least Concern (Endemic to Australia)	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Least Concern
Global Assessors	James, K.C. & 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	Mostly occurs deeper than current fisheries operations and assessed as at low risk.		

Summary

The Blue Skate is a small deepwater ray endemic to temperate southern Australia where it occurs in a wide range. It was incidentally caught in the Commonwealth Trawl Sector (CTS) of the Southern and Eastern Scalefish Fishery (SESSF) and released, though post-release mortality is unknown. Since 2007, fishing deeper than 700 m in most of the SESSF has been prohibited and thus this species now occurs beyond the depth of current fishing operations. However, a small amount (30 kg) was observed in the CTS from 2012–2016, which may have been an occasional animal at the edge of its depth range. It was assessed as at low risk in the CTS and also at low risk from both fishing and climate change. Therefore, the Blue Skate is assessed as Least Concern (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021) and Negligible (SAFS) in Australia.



Distribution

The Blue Skate is endemic to Australia (Last et al. 2016). It has a wide range in mainly temperate waters of southern Australia where it occurs from the Solitary Islands (New South Wales) to Perth (Western Australia) (Last and Stevens 2009, Kyne et al. 2021).

Stock structure and status

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

Fisheries

The Blue Skate was caught incidentally in the Commonwealth Southern and Eastern Scalefish Fishery (SESSF) but at an average annual catch of 653 kg between 2000–2006, catch levels were low (Walker and Gason 2007). Since 2007, fishing deeper than 700 m has been prohibited in most SESSF waters and thus this species now occurs beyond the depth of current fishing operations. From 2012–2016,

approximately 30 kg was observed in the Commonwealth Trawl Sector (CTS) catches (Sporcic et al. 2021a), which may have been an occasional animal at the edge of its depth range. The species is assessed at low risk in the CTS (Sporcic et al. 2021a) and not noted as occurring in the Great Australian Bight Trawl Sector (Sporcic et al. 2021b). The species vulnerability to fishing and climate change was also assessed as low (Walker et al. 2021).

Habitat and biology

The Blue Skate is demersal on the continental slope at depths of 765–1,440 m (Last et al. 2016). Maximum size is at least 65 cm total length (TL) with males mature at approximately 53 cm TL (McEachran and Last 2008). Little else is known of its biology.

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: at least 65 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: ~53 cm TL Females: unknown

CAAB Code: 37 031018

Link to IUCN Page: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/195465/68637112>

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

References

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